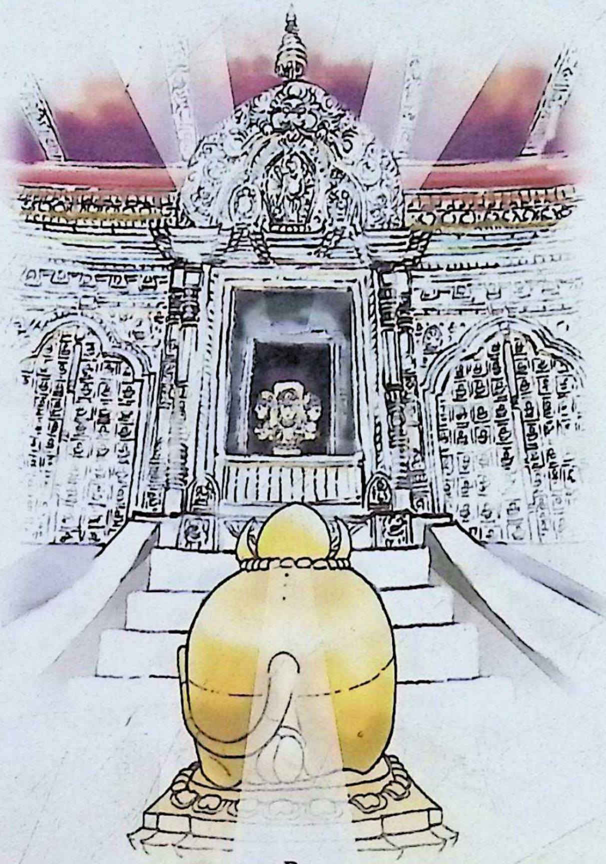
The Glory of Nepal

A Mythological Guidebook to Kathmandu Valley



By
William P. Forbes

with
V.K.Chaube

Illustrated by Raju B. Shakya 'SARAB'

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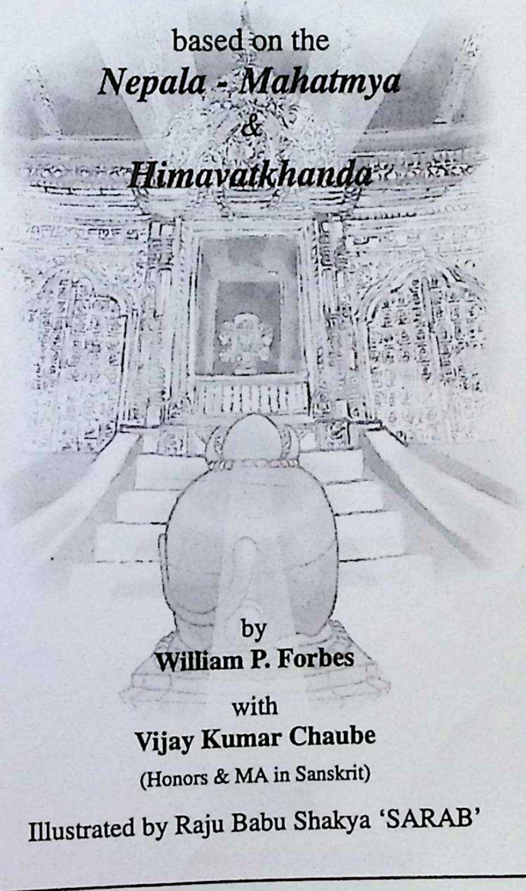

based on the
Nepala - Mahatmya
&
Himavatkhanda

by
William P. Forbes
with
Vijay Kumar Chaube
(Honors & MA in Sanskrit)

Illustrated by Raju Babu Shakya 'SARAB'

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Foreword

Puranas enjoy a place of pride in Sanskrit literature. They are the living legacy of the world of history. Out of eighteen Puranas credited to the Maharshi Vyasa, the *Skanda Purana* is counted among the Shaiva Puranas. Among the many sections (khanda) of the *Skanda Purana*, an important section is the *Himavatkhanda*. It provides a detailed description of the mountains, rivers, and temples found in the Himalayan region. Within this khanda there are some chapters dwelling on Nepal, denoting the erstwhile Nepal, which extended from the Indravati river at Dolalghat in the east, to the Trishuli river in the west. These chapters have been translated extremely well by American writer Mr. William Forbes, with the active help of Sri V. K. Chaube. Moreover, with the aim of driving home an exact view of Puranic events, Raju Babu Shakya (Sarab) has come up with apt illustrations for the book.

The author has appropriately titled the book as *The Glory of Nepal*. As a matter of fact, the chapters mentioned supply ample insight into how the Himalayas became sacred entities, how mankind stumbled upon the awesome powers of the Himalayas, how Lord Pashupatinath came to grace Nepal, and how Changu Narayan and Chandeshwari came to be stationed at Changu and Banepa respectively. Among its Puranic contents, the book also sheds light in English on how Lord Krishna and Pradyumna protected the erstwhile Kathmandu Valley.

The author, moreover, after having thoroughly conferred with local cognoscenti, makes a point of searching out the present day location of the Puranic sites. Since the language and presentation is extremely lucid and comprehensive, the book can certainly be counted upon to become an incomparable gift to that section of the readers for whom Nepali and Sanskrit are beyond comprehension.

Although there are translations of the *Nepal Mahatmya*, by Dr. Jayaraj Acharya in English, and into Nepali by Muktinath Khanal, my impression is that the work in hand has its own significance in the annals of Puranic publications.

Lastly, I would like to appreciate Mr. Forbes' efforts which will go a long way in invigorating our national pride, since the book in question can be expected to make available to English readers the Puranic sources of our history. I hope for this book's increasing popularity and reprints.

Hem Raj Gyawali
Chairman and Publisher
Kantipur Publications (P) Ltd.

Two Words

It is undisputed that Nepal, being the only Hindu country in the world, has a distinguished culture of its own. There are temples and statues, shrines and religious habitations (monasteries, hermitages, Veda pathashala-schools, etc.) everywhere–in the streets and lanes, in the fields and pastures, and in the courtyards. Many of those temples, shrines and images have their own religious and cultural history. Religious, cultural and spiritual factors play an important role in the social life of Nepal. Religion and culture are really the guiding forces behind many aspects of society.

Over a long period of time some temples, religious habitations and statues, which were the inseparable components of the religion and culture, have ceased to exist. A number of them, though in decline, still survive in one way or another. It is painful to see their spirit becoming defiled. Truth, non-violence, compassion, honesty, peace–such concepts, useful in life, are achievable through the constant practice of dharma and spirituality. It is not an exaggeration to say that the temples, religious habitations and images are sacred places, suitable for knowing and learning about many matters relating to dharma and spirituality.

It is worth remembering that the religious literature written in Nepal, like the *Nepala-Mahatmya*, *Himavatkhanda*, *Pashupati Purana*, etc. has preserved several images, temples, sacred ponds, and other holy bathing places. If the history of those sites had not been safeguarded in those books, many of them may have vanished. Even after a considerable passage of time, these holy places have survived as important religious sites, due to the information and explanations found in these books. Still, people remain ignorant about some of these places, even today. There may be important monasteries, temples, shivalingas or images close to one's house, or in one's neighborhood, yet their greatness is still unknown, just as when sandalwood is being used for the handle of a common pruning tool.

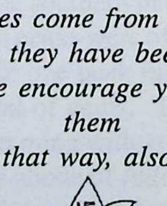
At such a time, Shri William Forbes and Shri Vijay Kumar Chaube, after laboring long, have brought out this book, with the intention of informing English speakers about all these things. This is certainly not a small task. Only by extreme zeal, devotion and effort can such a work be accomplished. In spite of the fact that Mr. Forbes grew up in a different religious and cultural atmosphere, still his devotion to the Hindu Dharma is so deep that this kind of thing is found in very few people. Having visited different religious sites, and having studied and surveyed many books, they have accomplished this work. I am happy to have taken some part in encouraging them in their work from time to time.

Taking into account the present situation, the condition of the remaining temples, religious habitations and images will become even more critical in the days to come, unless religious tourism is encouraged. With what words can I praise the work that Mr. Forbes and Shri Chaube have done? They have really accomplished a remarkable task. And by having the book illustrated, they have added fragrance to gold. Being a person who has the experience of how tiresome the work in preparing and writing a research book can be, I would like to thank the establishment which is going to publish this book for recognizing the importance of Mr. Forbes' and Shri Chaube's praiseworthy contribution.

May in future, also, such important works be written by the writers. It is my sincere wish that the Supreme Soul always help and encourage them to be successful in their task.

Dr. Govinda Tandan
Battisputtali, Kathmandu
Sivaratri
2000 A.D

In these stories,
whenever the name of a god, or a
Sanskrit term occurs for the first
time, it is put in italics. The
Glossary contains explanations
for all these words.
At the end of each chapter, there
is a listing of all the sacred spots
that are named in the story,
along with their locations. The
numbers indicate that the site is
part of the circumambulation of
the region described in Chapter 9.
The reader is invited to visit
these places.
The stories come from a tradition
in which they have been read out
loud. We encourage you to read
them
that way, also.

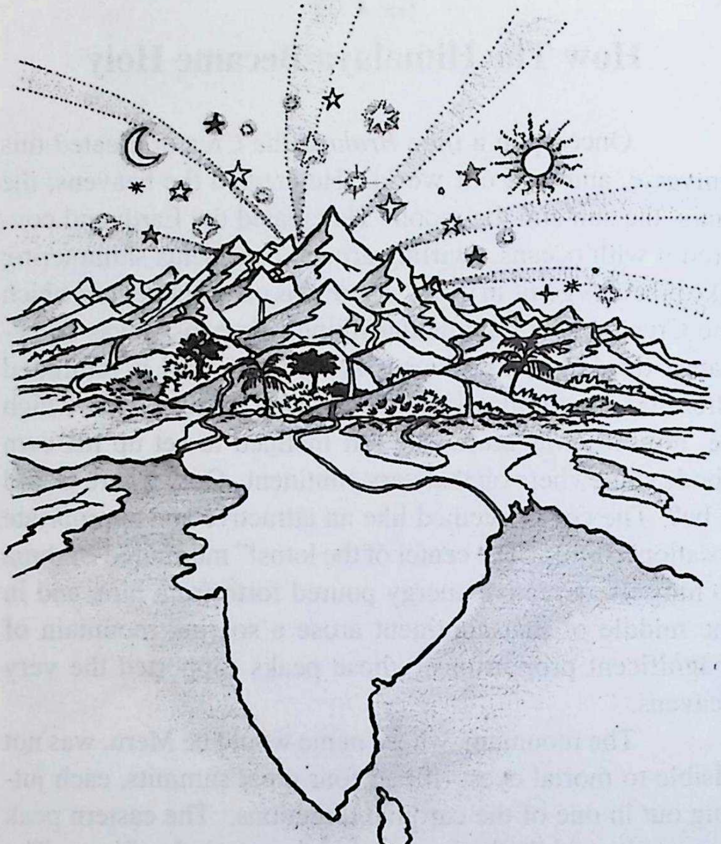


1

How The Himalaya Became Holy

Once upon a time *Brahma* the Creator created this universe, and in it our world. He created the heavens, the stars, the sun and the moon. He created the Earth and covered it with oceans, swirling around continents shimmering like precious gems in them. There was one continent to which the Creator took a particular liking. Perhaps it was so because the land was shaped like a lotus, and it reminded Brahma of the lotus rising from *Vishnu*'s navel, upon which he, himself, was born. He felt inclined to set up his own abode somewhere on that very continent. Only where would it be? The center seemed like an attractive and appropriate location to him. "The center of the lotus!" murmured Brahma to himself. Creative energy poured forth from him, and in the middle of that continent arose a soaring mountain of magnificent proportions, whose peaks supported the very heavens.

The mountain, whose name would be Meru, was not visible to mortal eyes. It had four great summits, each jutting out in one of the cardinal directions. The eastern peak was golden, while the southern peak was made of iron. The western and northern peaks were of silver and copper, respectively. Brahma made one peak full of coral, and one he endowed with a myriad of gems. The Creator fashioned the other two peaks, brimming with gold and crystals. The eastern peak became the abode of *Indra*, while the southern one became the abode of *Yama*. *Kubera* took up residence in the north, and *Varuna* in the west. Gods like *Agni, Vayu,* and others, established themselves on the lesser peaks, pointing in the intermediate directions. For the mountain had thousands of minor summits, upon which each and every god dwelt. Mt. Meru, with its peaks studded with gems, with the gods' wondrous cities paved with jewels upon it, with its



divine groves of miraculous trees bearing fruit in all seasons, and its fantastic gardens of flowers, with its nectar-bearing tanks with golden lotuses in them, seemed to contain in its bountifulness, everything that is lovely in all the fourteen realms of the universe (The universe is said to consist of seven upper realms, including the Earth and the heavens, and of seven lower realms. See: Glossary, Patala). Brightened by the multicolored cascades of the heavenly Ganga streaming from its summits in four directions–red in the east, black in the south, silvery in the west, and golden in the north–the noble Mt. Meru glittered like a banner, a standard of great splendor and dignity, honored in all the worlds.

Brahma knew that once the commotion of creation was over he would naturally take a back seat in the events of the world, while other great gods, notably Vishnu and *Shiva*, would keep things going and changing. His own mind-born son, Svayambhuva (The Self-Existing One), would be the first *Manu* in this *Kalpa.* In his treatise on ethics and politics, known as the "Manusmriti", he would recommend that human beings entering the final stages of their lives, leave their family and home, and live the religious life of the Vanaprastha, a forest dwelling hermit. Giving up all creature comforts, and eventually renouncing the world and its attachments completely, they would attain the stage of life called Sannyasa, the great renunciation. Brahma could not exactly do that entirely abandon the universe he created and go somewhere else. After all, where would it be, that place beyond creation? And would there be forests there? It all sounded rather dubious. On the other hand, and Brahma had eight hands, he could look forward to a comfortable retirement in his city of Manovati on the top of Mt. Meru. He recollected from some previous cycle of creation that many retired folks just used to like to sit outside in the sun, or on some porch or balcony, sipping their favorite form of nectar, be it lemonade or whatever, watching the world go by. Since the sun revolved continuously around Meru, Brahma anticipated no difficulty in finding a sunny sitting spot for his retirement. And with his four heads, he would have lots of world to watch. To Brahma, sitting passively and watching the lovely universe he created unravel would be renunciation enough.

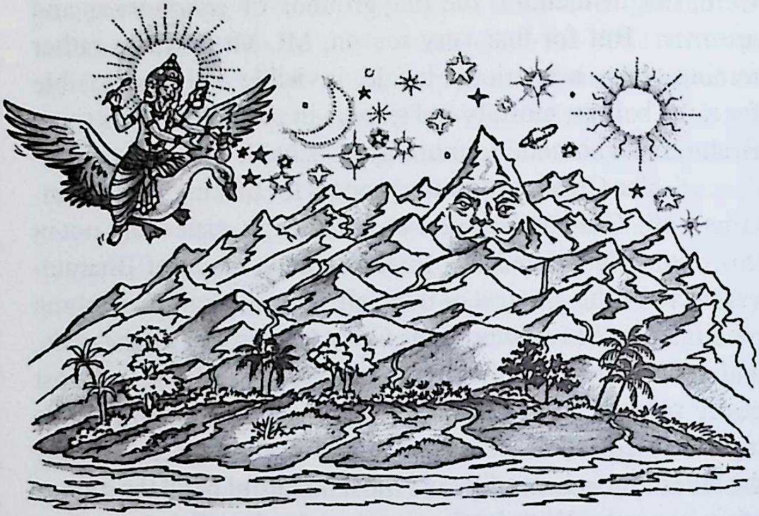
He then and there decided that, as the Senior Citizen of the Universe, he would try to set a good example for other senior citizens. He would have his heavenly porch on the southern side of the mountain. Since the petal of the 'lotus' stretching to the south of Meru would be a land of special interest to him, Brahma had designed it to be that field of action where the sacred rites and conduct enjoined according to the *Vedas* would be performed, eventually taking the performer to the bliss of paradise, or to the even greater beatitude of final liberation. He would teach the Veda to Manu, the first man, and they would help human beings ascend towards and attain the higher realms of creation , by performing religious acts. Since any number of those higherûrealms, like Vishnu's *Vaikuntha*, Indra's *Amaravati*, and Yama's *Samyamani*, were located on the slopes of Mt. Meru, practically just around the corner from Brahma's own city of, he could simply sit on his heavenly porch and, almost literally, watch the whole world go by. When he retires, of course.

But Brahma wasn't retired yet, and he wanted that land, which later would be called *Bharata-varsha*, where people would follow the perennial path of righteousness called the *Sanatana Dharma*, to be most conducive to that life-style. He wanted it to be a unique country, where the natural features and configuration of the land—its mountains, rivers, and forests–would help beings ascend towards the Supreme. Brahma immediately started creating mountains–many of them would later be considered holy–all across the land, mountains from which holy rivers would flow, forming at certain places sacred confluences and fords, thereby providing good waters for bathing and drinking, and an environment suitable for carrying out religious activities which help in crossing the ocean of the world, as well.

Brahma massed marvelous mountains from the south of Bharata-varsha to the north of it. He created the Malaya Mountain, the Rishabha Mountain, the Mahendra Mountain, the Vindhya Mountain, the Mandara Mountain, and then he created holy Mt. Kailasha, especially for Shiva. As these vigorous activities brought the Creator back towards Mt. Meru again, Brahma decided that the final mountain chain he created ought to be the greatest one. It should be the crowning glory of Bharata-varsha. Of course, nothing could be quite as magnificent as Mt. Meru, where his own metropolis was, where the paradises of so many gods were, and also where the *ashrams* of many great *siddhas* and *rishis* were, not to mention the playgrounds of *gandharvas* and *apsaras*. But for that very reason, Mt. Meru was a rather remote place, a restricted locale, invisible and inaccessible for most beings, mortals and sinners in particular. This time, Brahma had something more approachable in mind.

The Creator knew the process for making holy mountains well. Only technique was not enough, especially not in this case. He wanted this final mountain chain of Bharatavarsha to be the greatest of them all. For inspiration, Brahma meditated on Shiva, who is the Great God among all the gods, and at the same time the most merciful god, who is the most easily pleased. The mountain that Brahma created following this meditation was astonishing in all respects. It was the tallest, most beautiful, and most bountiful of all the mountains on earth. With its thousand peaks, it radiated peerless power. Next, Brahma exuberantly brought forth from himself the very essence of righteousness (*dharma*), pure as driven snow, and he immediately decorated the great mountain lavishly with these snows of dharma.

In this manner arose the most excellent among excellent mountains–Himavan. Surveying his latest creation, Brahma felt certain that this protean pile of peaks, glistening like so many silver tongues licking the vault of heaven, was meant to be a holy land, where Shiva rules supreme. Below its thousand summits, the great mountain had thousands of holy bathing places beckoning, it had thousands upon thousands of beautiful waterfalls cascading, and thousands of foothills undulating all around it. Some summits sparkled with a multitude of trees bursting with bright sprouts and tender shoots. All the peaks were full of many different and precious things. Some had cat's-eye gems, some contained diamonds, some moonstones, and some abounded with sun-crystals, looking like a wonderful array of lightning bolts. There were high peaks full of copper, and peaks full of iron. Similarly, there were peaks full of tin, lead, and various other



metals. Some peaks were tinted with beautiful mineral colors, like yellow orpiment, and red arsenic pigment. Other peaks were reddened with colored chalks, and others darkened with black antimony.

At night, the crown jewel of mountains, forever adorned with many different peaks, loomed tall and bright in the moonlight, looking as if it were a most precious shimmering mosaic of gems–a supernal sight surpassing the imagination. Some of its peaks looked golden, while some peaks looking like cat's-eye gems when crowned by moon rays, appeared even more full of brightness on account of the profusion of diamond-like crystals lit up by that moonlight scattered on them. The sapphire-like peaks glittered as if they were covered with a most beautiful mosaic of shining stones, while the topaz-like peaks glowed gently, looking as if they were surrounded by a pale saffron haze. The peaks like emeralds glistened green in the moonlight. They were studded with rocks of antimony, which glimmered upon them like a shadowy pavement. The moonstone-like summits glistened milky in the moonlight, with sun-crystals shimmering like rosy tiles on them. Crystal peaks glowed white in the moonlight. They were studded with rubies looking like a beautiful crimson mosaic. Exquisitely fashioned, the coral-like peaks smoldered crimson in the moonlight with a proliferation of gems upon them, like a pavement of many hues.

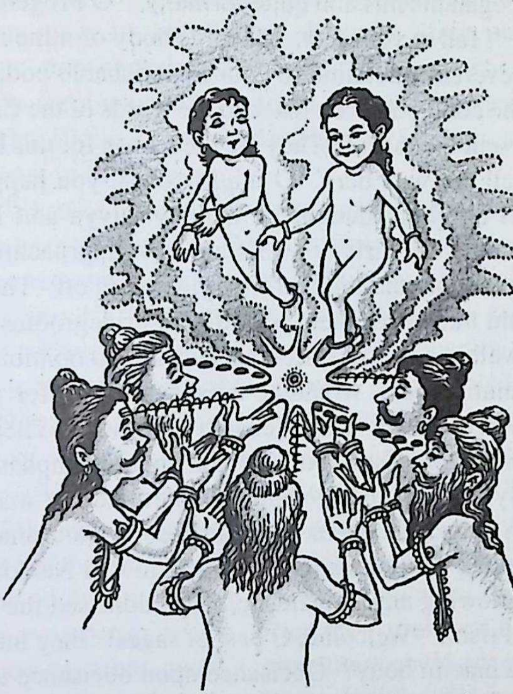
The Himalaya reigned over the world with great peaks like these. It shone with trees growing out of goldfields and plants shooting up from silver soils, with groves standing on top of copper-fields and thickets growing over veins of silver, and with creepers stemming from veins of gold and pure silver. It sparkled with beautiful golden flowers and blossoms of many hues, with bowers overgrown with creepers, and also with sprouts of *kusha* grass. It dazzled with marvelous golden lotuses, with blue lotuses rising out of silver sands, with assorted ponds, lakes, caves and glens, with waterfalls and most wonderful mountain peaks, and with their majestic slopes.

With his many peaks bearing different names, the supreme mountain-king Himavan, spanned the continent from east to west, from sea to shining sea. Bedecked with his jewelry of snow, Himalaya resembled the figure of great Mt. Meru. And every river that flowed from the mountain had the power to grant the objects of one's desire. These rivers sanctified with their touch the lands they flowed through. By the currents of two great rivers born of the Himalaya, the Brahmaputra and Ganga, many people would be cleansed of the taint of transgressing against the universal laws of dharma. Many folk would also be purified by the currents of the Bhadra, Alakananda, Reva, Shatarudra, Kaushiki, Gandaki, as well as by the waters of the Shipra, Vata, and other rivers, and by the foremost among them, the Vagmati. Brahma was sure of that.

After he created all the sacred mountains, Brahma set his mind to creating the creatures that would inhabit the world. But Meru and Himavan were extremely dear to his heart, and as soon as creation was well underway, and Brahma got a chance, the Unborn One started thinking about getting his two mountain-sons married. Stability was to be the hallmark of these newly created mountains. Meru was the axis of the world, and Himalaya would be its refuge. Marriage would enhance their stability in social terms, as well. On top of that, they would enjoy the three benefits of marriage. For only as householders, accompanied by a lawful wife, could they be allowed to perform the sacrifices to the gods which would increase their stock of dharma-merit. In marriage they would also be able to have sons who could help them in the after-life, by making offerings to the Progenitors *(Pitri)* on their behalf. Last, but not least, they would enjoy the raptures of conjugal bliss, along with the other pleasures of marriage, all of which are essential ingredients of a good life.

Thinking along these lines, Brahma decided that the most important thing was to unite his two sons, Meru and Himavan, with some faultless maidens from an illustrious family, whose members, both on the father's and mother's side are endowed with learning, austerity and meritorious works for at least ten generations. This last requirement was a little difficult to meet, even for Brahma, because creation had just occurred and was still happening. Everybody in that golden age, even humans, lived a terribly long time. It would be hard to find any family with ten generations. Even his own family, great as it would become, was still only getting under way. But if one was looking for generations upon generations of meritorious activity, Brahma knew he would be able to come upon it sooner or later in the clan of the Progenitors, who were also Brahma's own grandsons, being the offspring of his mental sons, the seven great sages.

Brahma summoned the group of Progenitors, and firmly ordered them to create by their mental powers two never-aging and immortal maidens, with lovely, auspiciously marked bodies, for the purpose of marrying them to Meru



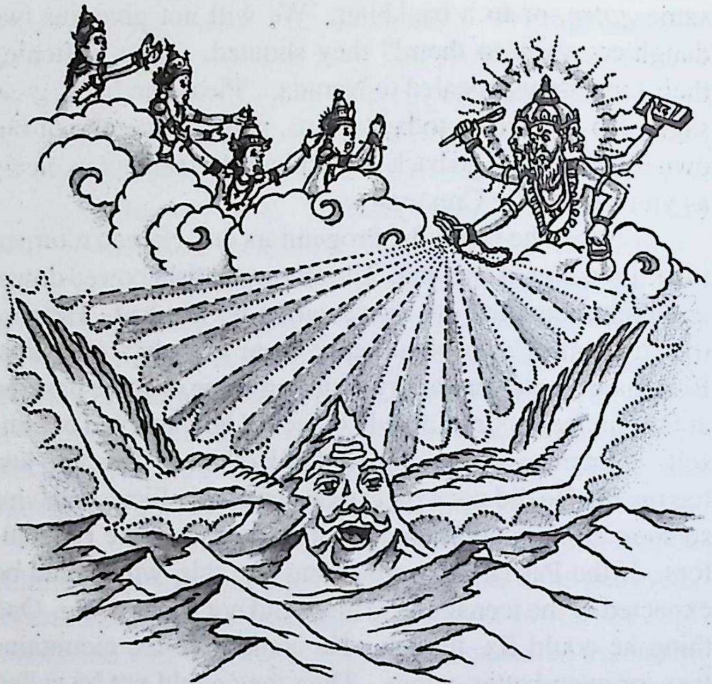
and Himavan. When they heard the Creator's request, the Progenitors piously assented, saying "Om", and returned hastily to their realm. There, they put their minds together, and out of this fusion streamed forth the finest of maidens. Among all of them, the most lovely were Divya and Mena, both having beautiful, auspiciously marked bodies. These two daughters of the Progenitors of old, perfect in all signs, were chosen as the future brides of Meru and Himavan, respectively. Both young girls grew vigorously while playing the games of childhood, and after some time they reached the age of matrimony. But Brahma heard never heard anything from the Progenitors about Divya and Mena, and their intended marriages. He then dispatched *Narada,* the roving rishi, to meet the Progenitors, and convey his impatience with them.

Arriving through the air at the Progenitors' abode, Narada began his mission quite formally. "O Progenitors!" he said, "I fall at your feet. May this body of mine remain bent in reverent salutation to your imperishable bodies! O Lords," he continued, "do listen to the words of the Creator, who has sent me to you! They are the reason for this body's coming all the way here. O mighty ones, you happen to have two excellent daughters, namely Divya and Mena. These two lovely girls of yours are now approaching the age when one should think of marrying them off. The Creator would like to see them joined with bridegrooms soon. As you well know, it has been his considered opinion from the beginning, that it would be most auspicious for you to give Divya to Meru, and Mena to Himavan. These are Brahma's own words to you!" Narada finished emphatically.

By the time the Progenitors heard the last words of Brahma's message to them, they had become quite annoyed. Nevertheless, they immediately bowed low to Narada, and without showing any impatience, they addressed the much respected rishi. "Welcome, O best of sages!" they intoned. "Are you hale in body? Obeisance upon obeisance to that Creator who emanated the whole world!" Having observed the formalities, the Progenitors cried out plaintively to Narada, "Alas, great misery is being inflicted on us by the words of the Creator that you have brought with you! O Lord of munis, how can we give our two daughters away to two immovable objects? For it is said," and here their voices became slightly sanctimonious, "that neither on account of the irrefutable great scriptural utterances, nor even at the very command of Brahma, should the wise, desirous of the general welfare, give young girls in marriage to an immovable object who is motionless, or for that matter to a leper, or a one-eyed man, or a lame person, or to someone diseased, or deaf, or devoid of any good qualities, or dumb, impotent, yellow-eyed, or squint-eyed, or to somebody stupid, to a deformed person, or someone of another race, or caste, or to a man without any caste, or to someone of the same *gotra*, or to a backbiter. We will not give our two daughters away to them!" they shouted. Then, softening their tone, they appealed to Narada, "Please go back, great sage. Do forgive us today. To us, you are like one of our own limbs. Please go back and explain our feelings, as nicely as you can, to the Creator."

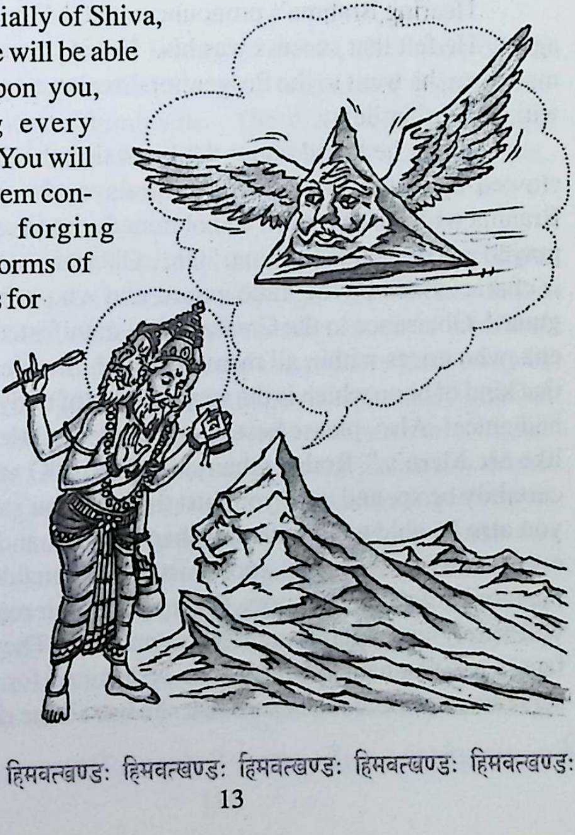
When he heard the Progenitors out, Narada returned to the lotus feet of Brahma. The renowned rishi bowed down, and then recounted the conversation he just had. Hearing the Progenitor's insolent reply from Narada's own lips, Brahma became very angry. Quoting some obscure passage at him, indeed! "Immovable objects," he mumbled at himself. "Not even at the command of Brahma." This was just too much. He did not expect that sort of rebellious behavior so soon after creation, and certainly not from the Progenitors. If the Patriarchs were acting like this, what could be expected of the teenagers? Things did not augur well... One thing he could fix, though. He could give the mountains legs, or even better, wings. Then they could not be called stationary anymore, and the Progenitors could not object to marrying them to their daughters. Holding his ire inside, the Unborn Creator approached the mountains. Suddenly, out of sheer rage, he began creating wings for them. First he attached magnificent wings to Himalaya. Satisfied with his work, Brahma proceeded to Mt. Meru. But just as he was fashioning mighty Meru's wings, the other gods arrived on the scene and began beseeching Brahma in a chorus anxious voices, "O Omnipresent One! You should never make wings for this mountain! If he flies about from one place to another with those wings, the world below will perish! This very earth, created with great toil, will sink wherever Mt. Meru lands, O Brahma!"

The Creator whose soul is Truth, listened indulgently to the pleas of the gods and rishis, and graciously desisted from making a pair of wings for Mt. Meru. Seeing his own



father abandon the creation of wings for him, Mt. Meru, the jewel of mountains, became very upset. He threw himself down at Brahma's feet and cried out to him, "O Father! Because you so readily accepted those nasty-minded gods' and rishis' opinions, now I am being cheated out of my turn to get wings! If they are going to oppose me in this way, then I swear to you that by the power of my peak, I shall make their realms tumble down completely, right now!" Brahma listened patiently to the mountain's moans, and said in his most benign voice, "Do not ever be troubled by not having wings, monarch of mountains. You can remain stationary, as a part of the Earth, but with this subtle body of yours–which I am right this moment bestowing on you–you may always move about as you wish. Your massive body, however, must be held down on account of its threat to all the worlds.

"Listen, Mt. Meru! Because of your disappointment, I will confer another boon on you. From now on, those who treat you disrespectfully, will be guilty of sin. O son! Never should the notion of any dissimilarity between our two bodies be considered. He who makes that distinction, will be dismembering me in effect. Known as one of the cardinal mountains of this world, beings will honor you as its axis. I will protect all those living upon you, who also treat you with reverence. Those who perform austerities, who sing the praise of *Rudra*, who practice charity and dharma, who are truly righteous, who are cleansed of their sins by bathing in your sacred bathing places, who are intent on truthfulness, who are peaceful and ever eager to be kind and giving, who are devotees of the Supreme Goddess, *Bhagavati*, or of Vishnu, and especially of Shiva, they alone will be able to live upon you, enjoying every comfort. You will nurture them constantly, forging various forms of happiness for them.



But those people whose stock of virtuous deeds is expended, whose body is blemished with sin, throw them off your mountain frame swiftly, and without any mercy.

"My handsome son, go resolutely in your subtle body to the realm of the Progenitors and marry one of their daughters. Go there, and at the proper and auspicious moment observe the Progenitors' maidens well–especially the one named Divya–for you must choose a wife with the right signs. Above all, remember, son! Only a woman familiar with the *mantras* used in the religious rites that you will henceforth perform together as a couple can be a suitable wife for you. She should be an aid and comfort to you in all your other activities, as well. Remember that a good wife should be maternal when it comes to affection, but like a beautiful bawd in bed."

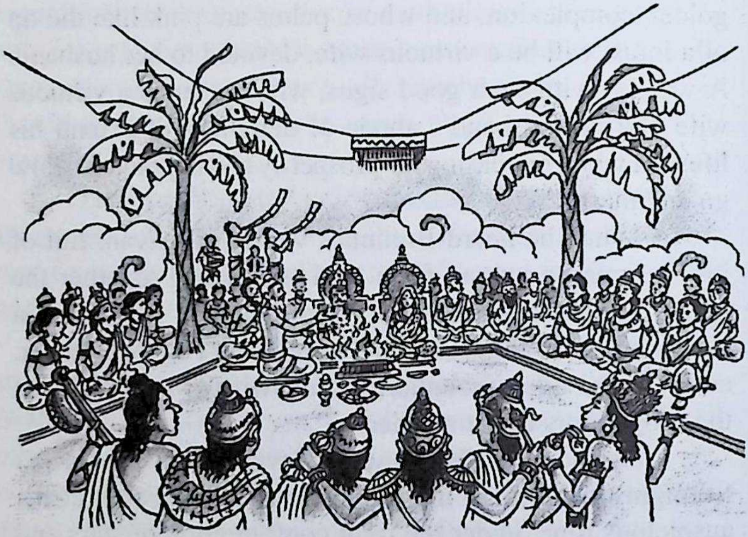
Hearing Brahma's pronouncement, Meru was happy again. He felt that success was his. Having assumed a human form, he went to the Progenitors' realm, to get married without further delay.

When he heard about the boon that the Creator bestowed upon the great Meru, Himalaya also gladdened Brahma with his devotion, and obtained a boon as well. He prayed and prayed to Brahma, "Om! Obeisance to you, who is characterized by the three *gunas,* and who is beyond the gunas! Obeisance to the Creator of all manifested phenomena, who arises within all manifestation! Shower upon me that kind of boon which is the very essence of undying mercy and grace! Also, please bestow upon me a subtle body just like Mt. Meru's." Brahma then said to him, "O son! May it certainly be so, and unto you, just the way you say it! May you also be able to assume any shape at will, and go wherever you wish. Now you, too, must marry a maiden born in the family of the Progenitors, O son, go to their realm! They will surely give their daughter to you now. They have, in fact, a maiden named Mena, who is destined for you. Observe her well, and make sure that she has all the right signs.

Select a lass who has a delicate, slim-waisted body, and perfect limbs, who walks swayingly, like a swan or an elephant Her voice should be soft and mellifluous, like a cuckoo's or a swan's. Make sure that her laughter is attractive, as well. The sound of her name should also be sweet and agreeable. To hear it should give a lilt to your heart. You must know that a girl whose face is like the full moon, and is radiant like the morning sun, who has large eyes, and lips lusciously red like the Bimba fruit (Momordica monadelpha), can give pleasure. But among a thousand, that maiden who has a golden complexion, and whose palms are pink like the tip of a lotus, will be a virtuous wife, devoted to her husband. A woman with such good signs, who becomes a virtuous wife and her husband's abode of delight, will extend his lifespan while increasing his prosperity and happiness. Now go and marry!"

When he heard Brahma's words, Himavan, full of joy, assumed a human form, and summoned together the munis and lesser mountains. The delighted Himavan, in the company of the wise folk, with Narada as their leader, and with the other mountains, went swiftly to the realm of the Progenitors to get married.

And so, on a Thursday, the eleventh day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Magha (Jan./Feb.), at the auspicious time, under the right configuration of stars and planets in relation to the sun, the Progenitors gave away in marriage to the golden Mt. Meru their auspiciously marked daughter named Divya. Meru overjoyed, returned with her to his abode. And on a Thursday, the thirteenth day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Vaisakha (April/May), under the lunar constellation of *Revati* (which marks the end of Pisces), with the right configuration of stars and planets in relation to the sun, and with Jupiter at mid-heaven, the Progenitors of old, with solemn vows and the prescribed rituals, gave in marriage to Himavan the maiden called Mena, along with a dowry of cows and gold. They bestowed upon the daughter born of their own mind one hundred attendant maidens with beautiful faces, all decked-out lavishly, along with a gift of ten thousand measures of gold, Furthermore, the Progenitors, in the public assembly, gave their son-in-law a blessing, by touching him on the head with their hands and saying, "O son! May you live long and happily, as long as the Earth endures. May you be the king of mountains, powerful, and a trove of mercy for the world. May you be a refuge for all the people, and be venerated by the whole world. May all the waters that stream from you become sacred bathing places. All those beings born in four different ways (from an egg, a womb, a seed, and 'sweat', i.e., heat and moisture), who come to live on you, will be freed from every sin and reach the highest state. People dwelling on you, although devoid of spiritual knowledge, will nevertheless, in their next life, attain the highest liberation, which is hard to realize, even through *yoga.*" Then her fathers, turning to Mena said, "O noble lady! May you be the favorite of your husband, may you not become a widow, may you be ever young and immortal, and may you

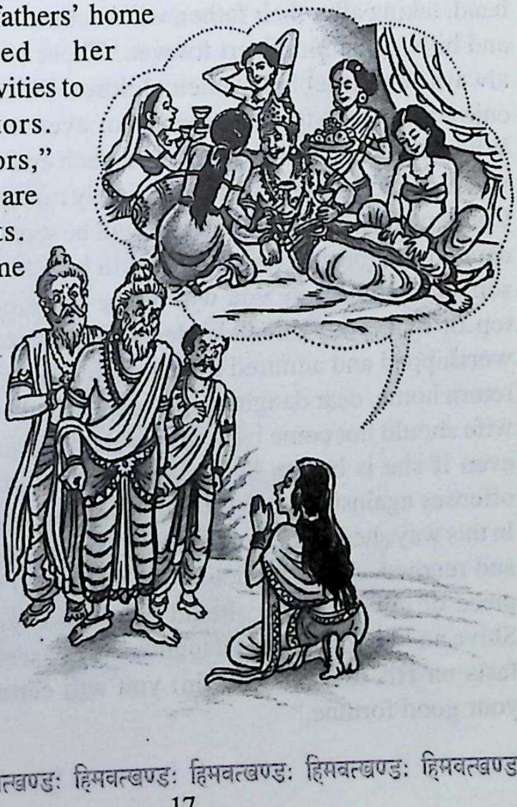


bear many sons. May you be extolled and venerated by gods and rishis, and praised by Shiva Himself. May you be merciful to all the people, and be their untiring protectress."

After conferring on both of them a blessing in this way, and having feasted them and treated them with much deference, the Progenitors sent Himavan and Mena, along with numerous attendants, to their home.

Taking his bride, Himavan, amusing himself along the way with his counselors, returned to his mountainous abode. Their journey was accompanied by many auspicious events. Then both of them enjoyed repeatedly the happiness produced by husband and wife, and so the couple remained for a long time, savoring the delights of conjugal life.

But at the end of fifteen celestial years, Mena returned to her fathers' home and reported her husband's activities to the Progenitors. "O Progenitors," she said, "you are my parents. Please take me back again, for I am being constantly neglected by my husband! Allow me to stay only here,

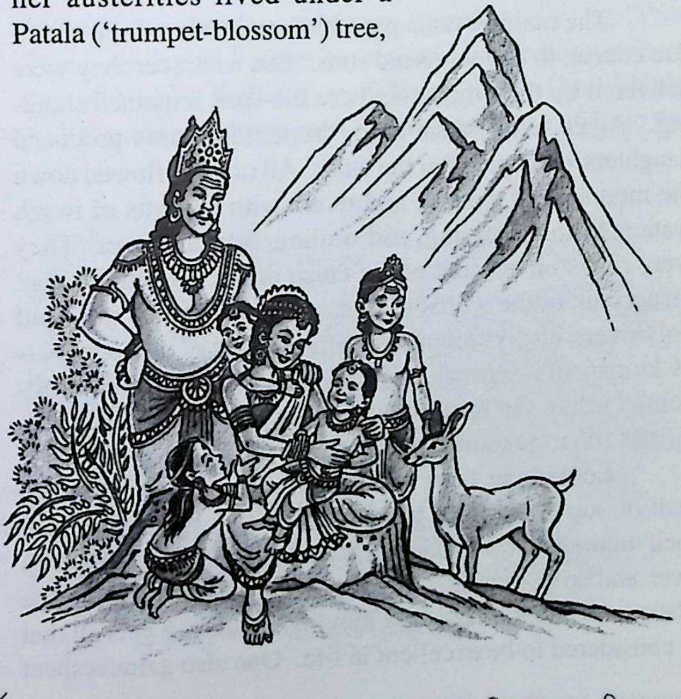


serving your lotus feet. My husband does not stay with me alone even for a moment, O Fathers! He acts uncomfortable with me, and seems afraid of me. He never looks at my face with joy. He has become the maidservants' lover. Now only they are his darlings. By taking turns they keep his company constantly, and do not leave him for a moment, neither day nor night."

Upon hearing the words of their lovely daughter, the Progenitors became filled with indignation, and immediately began to revile the mountain from afar. Then they turned to Mena and consoled her with their fatherly advice. "O daughter," said the Progenitors, "since those girls are only petty little servant girls, do they treat you with disrespect. But do not worry about them and what they do. Know that all the male offspring they might have with your husband, taking after their father, will become small mountains and hills, remaining inert forever. Those servant girls will always be so troubled by their children, that they will never enjoy happiness for a moment, not even with their lover. When they give birth to daughters, each and every daughter will turn into a stream, and immediately run away from them. Consequently, your maidservants will be separated from their daughters at birth. It is you who will bear Himavan's eldest son, and in that way you will be the pre-eminent one. On top of that, your three slender-waisted daughters will be worshipped and admired by the people at large. Therefore return home, dear daughter, the same way that you came. A wife should not come back to stay with her parents' family, even if she is beaten by her husband. Forbearing all the offenses against her, a wife should stay in her lord's house. In this way she will be rewarded with progeny, wealth, honor, and renown. Have no doubt." They ended with this final piece of advice, "You should continuously worship both Shiva and His consort, O daughter. By observing vows and fasts on His lunar days (tithi) you will certainly get back your good fortune."

When she heard her fathers' compelling advice, meant only for her own good, Mena returned swiftly to her husband's house, along with the girl-friends who had accompanied her. Some time passed while Mena, at the command of the Progenitors, fasted, undertook vows and worshipped *Shankara* with devotion. By the power of her meritorious acts, she was re-united with her husband, with great ardor, and passed the time enjoying pleasures fit for a queen.

After some time she gave birth to an excellent son, to Mt. Mainaka, who rose from the ocean to afford a rest for *Hanuman* when he was on his way to *Lanka*. After an interval of time, three daughters were born to Mena, as well. These three sisters became renowned for keeping their solemn vows, and for the great and severe austerities they endured. They were called Aparna, Ekaparna and Ekapatala. The daughter who in the course of her austerities lived under a Patala ('trumpet-blossom') tree,



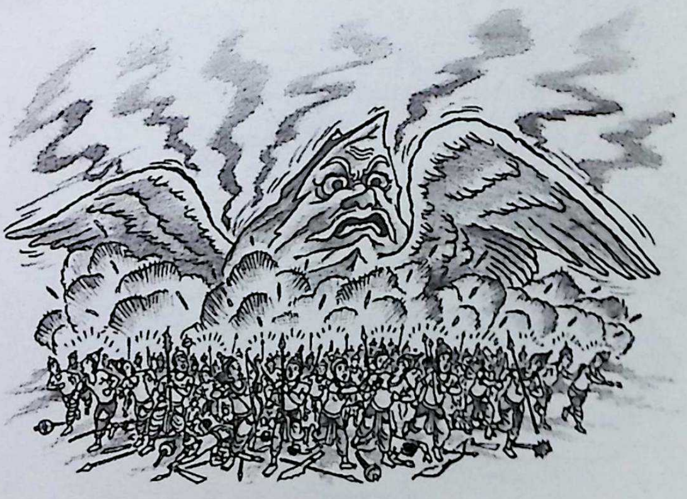
and ate only one blossom from it every two thousand years was called Ekapatala (one trumpet-blossom). The one who lived under a banyan tree, and ate but one leaf every two thousand years was called Ekaparna (one leaf). The daughter who in the course of her austerities gave up eating even one leaf, and who lived without any shelter whatsoever, was called Aparna (no leaf). She also became known as Uma, because her mother, upset by the severity of the girl's asceticism, pleaded with her to stop her *tapasya* by repeating to her gently, "U, ma!" (Oh, don't!)

First Himavan gave Aparna away in marriage to the Great God, Shiva. Then he gave Ekaparna to Asita, the rishi who spread the story of the Mahabharata, recorded by his guru Veda Vyasa, to the realm of the Progenitors. The remaining daughter he married to rishi Jaigishavya, the ancient master of *Samkhya* and Yoga, who attained salvation by dint of his austerities.

The maidservants gave birth to one hundred, and in due course, to one thousand sons. But wherever they were delivered by their mothers, there the sons remained standing. Again, after some time, the maidservants produced daughters, one right after the other. All of them flowed down the mountain as streams and rivers with currents of rough waters, beating, roaring, and wailing, over and over. They were rivers on account of the curse of the Progenitors, but on account of the words of Brahma, they were all pure and holy rivers, always granting the fulfillment of the four goals of human life–sensory enjoyment (kama), material well-being (artha), the meeting of social and personal responsibilities (dharma), and transcendence (moksha).

Looking at their children, the servant girls felt the stab of sorrow in their hearts. They admonished each of their motionless sons, cajoling, threatening, and beating them over and over, saying, "O son, you always remain in one place and do not go out. By moving about, one gets all that is considered to be excellent in life. One also gains respect and acquires daring." But even though they were castigated like this by their own mothers, the sons did not move. They simply could not. They could only reply with resignation, "O mothers, we do not have the power to move." When they realized what sort of sons they had, and when they saw their daughters flowing away, the maidservants became very alarmed. Full of anguish, they described their predicament to their husband. The sagacious Himavan, having heard the sad story of his darlings, with sweetly spoken words consoled and counseled wisely his junior wives as best as he could.

At the end of one hundred *Yugas*, a war broke out between the gods and *asuras*. Mt. Kashipu negotiated a pledge from Himavan to fight alongside the demons. Then the winged Himavan struck at the gods' army by unfurling his wings and causing the sky to disappear. When the gods' army realised the sort of mountain it was up against, it was filled with terror and ran to Vishnu for refuge. Crying, "Protect us, protect us !" they beseeched him in many voices, "O Lord Vishnu, O Preserver, O Never-falling One! Shield us, O Creator, O Destroyer, O Protector! Save us from the



and ate only one blossom from it every two thousand years was called Ekapatala (one trumpet-blossom). The one who lived under a banyan tree, and ate but one leaf every two thousand years was called Ekaparna (one leaf). The daughter who in the course of her austerities gave up eating even one leaf, and who lived without any shelter whatsoever, was called Aparna (no leaf). She also became known as Uma, because her mother, upset by the severity of the girl's asceticism, pleaded with her to stop her *tapasya* by repeating to her gently, "U, ma!" (Oh, don't!)

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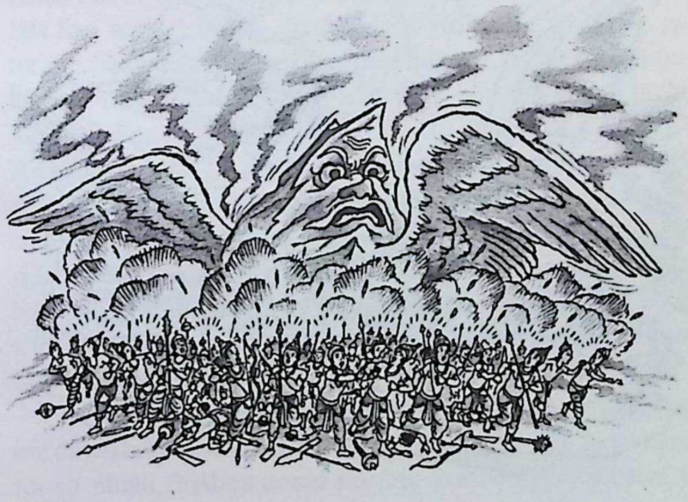
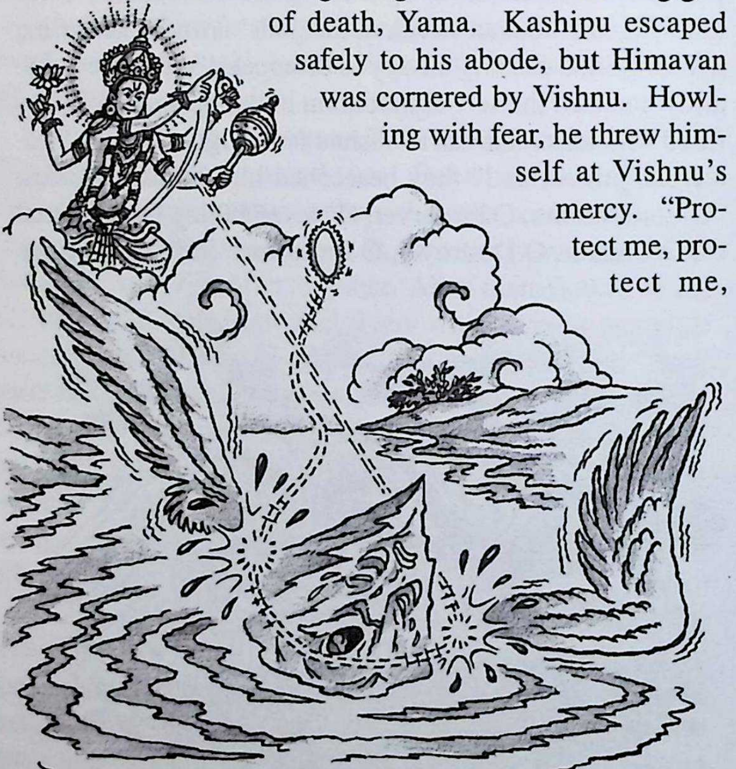


villainy of the mountain Kashipu, O Lord." Having listened to their pleas, Hari rose from the ocean of milk, raised up his terrifying *sudarshana chakra,* and said to the gods, "Do not be afraid of him, O Gods. Retaliation is on its way. The rogue who is the leader of this gang will be pacified. I am here for the chastisement of the wicked, and for the protection of the just. For that very purpose, I send down into the world incarnations of myself in different bodies, again and again."

After he said this, *Narayan*a, followed by the immortal gods, went swiftly to where Kashipu was. When they saw Vishnu arriving together with the gods, Kashipu and the Himavan both fled for fear of the Sudarshana chakra, just like living beings flee the terminating god of death, Yama. Kashipu escaped safely to his abode, but Himavan was cornered by Vishnu. Howling with fear, he threw himself at Vishnu's mercy. "Protect me, protect me,



O Almighty Preserver, O Grandfather!" "He who sides with my enemies, only causes himself grief," said Vishnu to Himavan, and he flared up with anger. The enraged Vishnu suddenly charged, and aiming at the wings of the mountain, violently threw the discus. The divine weapon quickly cut asunder both of Himavan's wings. After it cut them to shreds, the weapon returned tamely to Vishnu's hand, landing on his finger. Then, to the sound of all the gods singing his praises, Vishnu returned to his supreme abode. The gods, having quit the battlefield, also went back to their respective realms.

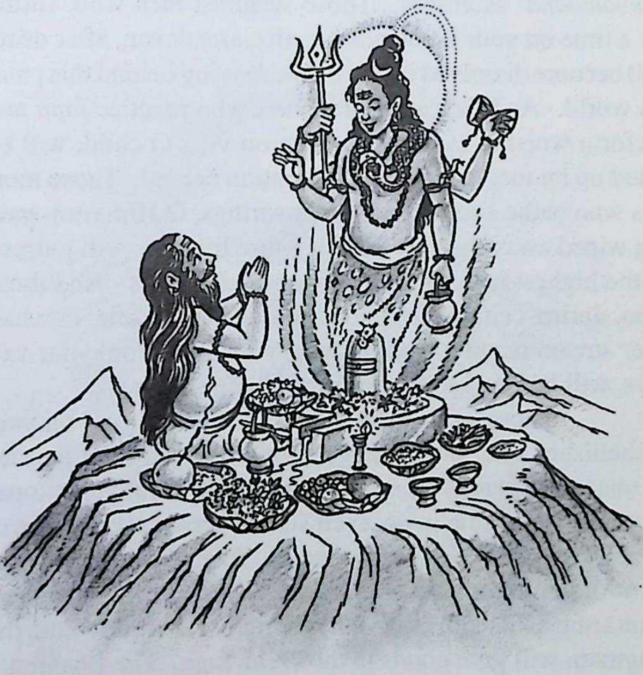
With his wings cut off, the miserable Himavan dragged his huge body to Brahma, and described everything that had happened, while showing his father his wounds. Hearing his words, and seeing the poor mountain seared with pain, the Creator tried to console him with sweet words, and advised him, "You must immediately propitiate Vishnu, the One who is tender towards devotion, for He, without a doubt, gives to His devotees their hearts' desire." When he heard this, Himavan assumed the form of a man and taking with him a magic gem went along with his retinue to where Hari was seated. Having placed the present meekly before Vishnu, Himavan circumambulated Him, and then bowed down to His feet with devotion, and praised Him over and over, intoning, "Homage to Narayana, the Unborn One, reverent salutations to the Lord of the celestials, to the Joy which is the Refuge of men! Obeisance to You, O Leader of the World!" After doing this for a while, Himavan, feeling Vishnu's benign gaze upon him, began to plead. "Lord," he said, "As a stationary being because of my not having wings now, I am ridiculed all the time by other creatures who can move about. Sweet sire, I was made by the Creator equipped with a body which can assume any shape at will. Please at least restore that boon to me."

When he saw the mountain, filled with devotion, bowing down humbly before him, requesting the thing he yearned for so much, Vishnu could not but want to give a boon to such a devotee. "O, dear child," he tenderly said, "there is one thing you must understand–that huge body of yours must remain stationary for a long time, because the people will be perpetually in terror of your moving about hither and thither and landing on them. O mountain, do not be upset and resentful because of that, but instead, become the protector of the people. With this subtle body you have, child, you may be able to change your form to suit you at any time. Listen! I will give you a boon, the highest of boons. From today, O Monarch of Mountains, you will be worshipped by the people. I, myself, will dwell on you eternally, with my retinue, and the Gods. Brahma, Shiva and the siddhas will also dwell on you, along with their retinues, and many sages, too. The Lords of the Directions will attend on you, as well as the *yakshas,* gandharvas, and *danavas.* The apsaras also will dwell on you, forever joyfully practicing their arts. You will always be a mountain adorned with dharma and divinity. May you never be used for unrighteousness, for you are the sanctuary of all the gods. There is no difference ever between beholding me and beholding you. The fool who makes that separation is acting like a person who severs my limbs apart. You will become a holy mountain full of hermitages of sages, just as I am replete with all the Gods. He who realizes that we are equal, attains the highest state. O King of mountain kings! Go, to your own auspicious peak to practice austerities propitiating the Great God, Shiva. He, also, will grant you your heart's desire."

After he granted in this manner a boon to Himavan, Vishnu disappeared. The boon-receiving mountain-king Himalaya returned to his massive body. After that Vishnu began to live on Himavan all the time. The Great Vishnu, whose head was once cut off, lived on a golden-peaked mountain, constantly adored by the gods and asuras, and particularly by the assembly of Progenitors. And Himavan, thereafter, was constantly worshipped by everyone living on his summits.

At the end of one hundred celestial years, the mountain, who remained confined all that time to a heavenly hermitage, obtained a great boon by the very grace of Pashupati. The venerable Himachala, the sanctum of all the gods, truly received the munificence of Shiva, the god who is swiftly pleased. From that time on, the adornment of the mountains, Himalaya, became laden with austerities, bestowing the benefits of them upon beings.

Himavan propitiated Shankara by the most severe ascetic practices, and then, pleased, the Great God granted him most excellent boons. Shiva said to him, "May you be imperishable, O Mountain of Snow, for as long as Brahma endures. Until then, remain fixed and unmoving like Mt. Meru. As long as people do not perform austerities on you, the Mountain of Snow, they will not be qualified to dwell on Mt. Meru as sinless ones. O gold-bearing mountain! I will

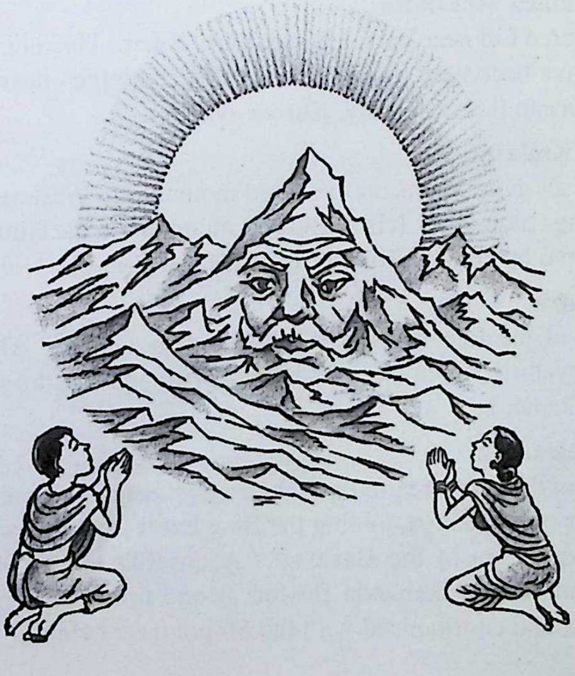


dwell on you in a subtle body. Brahma, Vishnu, the Guardians of the directions, and all the major Gods, will dwell on you always. My adorable beloved, Parvati, along with hosts of attendants, will also dwell in different forms on your peaks, dispensing boons to all the classes of beings. The gandharvas and apsaras, the siddhas, divine sages, and ascetics will dwell on your ridges, as well as yakshas, *rakshasas,* and danavas.

"Human beings will live perpetually on your slopes. Nourishing them with fruits, roots and grains, you will protect them, O Himalaya. Mortals living in houses, will ever inhabit your valleys and slopes, your summits and spurs. After death they will, along with their families, live in luxury in the highest heaven, for as many divine years as the ordinary years they resided on you in life. Those who climb any one of your summits, even though ignorant of your greatness, will obtain the fruits of the great *Vajapeya* and *Ashvamedha* sacrifices. Those steadfast men who, sitting for a time on your highlands practice asceticism, after death will become dissolved in me, Shiva, leaving behind this painful world. And those resolute ones, who practice *japa* and perform worship to me for a time on you, O child, will be lifted up by me, leaving transmigration behind. Those mortals who bathe even once in your springs, O Himavan, having wiped away the sins of their entire lifetime, will journey to the highest heaven after leaving their bodies. And those who, during certain auspicious conjunctions, bathe in whatever stream may be flowing from you, even from your valleys, will be freed from the sins of seven lifetimes.

"Those, who from a distance merely gaze on you, embellished with snow and gold, will be freed from the sins of one year, there is no doubt. If a person from your slopes or peaks kills sometimes, even such a person lacking devotion, I will protect once, O mountain. Your rivers, the Shaitya, the Alakananda, the Bhadra, the Haimavati, Gandaki, Shatarudra, Bhagirathi, Satyaganga, Kaushiki, and the Bagmati, will give boons in the *Treta Yuga*. The Bhagirathi and Alakananda will confer boons in the *Dvapara Yuga*. Till the middle of the *Kali Yuga*, the Vagmati, and for the remainder, the Gandaki, will be the rivers bestowing upon the people living in the world of mortals their heart's desire. You will always be adorned by these purifying rivers, and the might of the eight super-natural powers descending from me. Go, O Monarch of Mountains, and be possessed of many sons. My intention is that you become related to my own family."

Thus having obtained the boon from Rudra, the Himalaya became constantly worshipped by the gods and all beings, as the austere Lord of the Mountains. And so Himavan, Lord of Mountains, inhabited by the gods, including Brahma, Vishnu and *Maheshvara*, became bountiful and completely fruitful by virtue of the unique boons bestowed upon him.



Location of places mentioned in the story

(in order of appearance)

Malaya Mountain
The southern portion of the Western Ghats extending south of the river Kaveri to Kanyakumari. The ashram of rishi Agastya (see chapter 8, 9) is said to be on one of its peaks.

Rishabha Mountain
The Palani Hills in Madurai district Tamil Nadu.

Mahendra Mountain
The entire range of hills, including the Eastern Ghats, extending from Orissa to the district of Madurai.

Vindhya Mountain
A range of hills connecting the northern extremities of the Eastern and Western Ghats, and separating the Deccan plateau from the Gangetic plain.

Mandara Mountain
A sacred hill near Banka, Bhagalpur, Bihar. This hill is said to have been used as the churn-staff during the churning of the ocean (see: Glossary, Kurma avatara).

Mt. Kailasha
The abode of Shiva, and a sacred mountain in Western Tibet (Kang Rimpoche) It is the holiest mountain in the Himalaya, revered by Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Bon-po.

Bhadra
One of the four streams of the heavenly Ganga. Also the Tabhyakusi Khola (see: Chapter 7, Vira and Bhadra rivers' confluence).

Alakananda
One of the four streams of the heavenly Ganga. Also a headwater of the Ganga, joining the Bhagirathi (see: below) near Devaprayaga in the Garhwal. According to the Skanda Purana, the Alakananda flowed at one time much further south, and confluenced with the Shipra (see: below).

Reva
The river Naramada, flowing from the Amarakantaka Hill in the Vindhya Mountains.

Shatarudra
The river Sutlej, flowing in the Punjab.

Kaushiki
The Sunkoshi river.

Gandaki
The Kali Gandaki river.

Shipra
The river on which the city of Ujjain stands. In some Puranas, this river is said to flow from a lake of the same name, west of the Himalaya Mountain. Nowadays, it arises in the Vindhyas.

Vata
The exact location of this stream is unknown.

Vagmati
The Bagmati river.

Shaitya
One of the four streams of the heavenly Ganga, also known as the Shita.

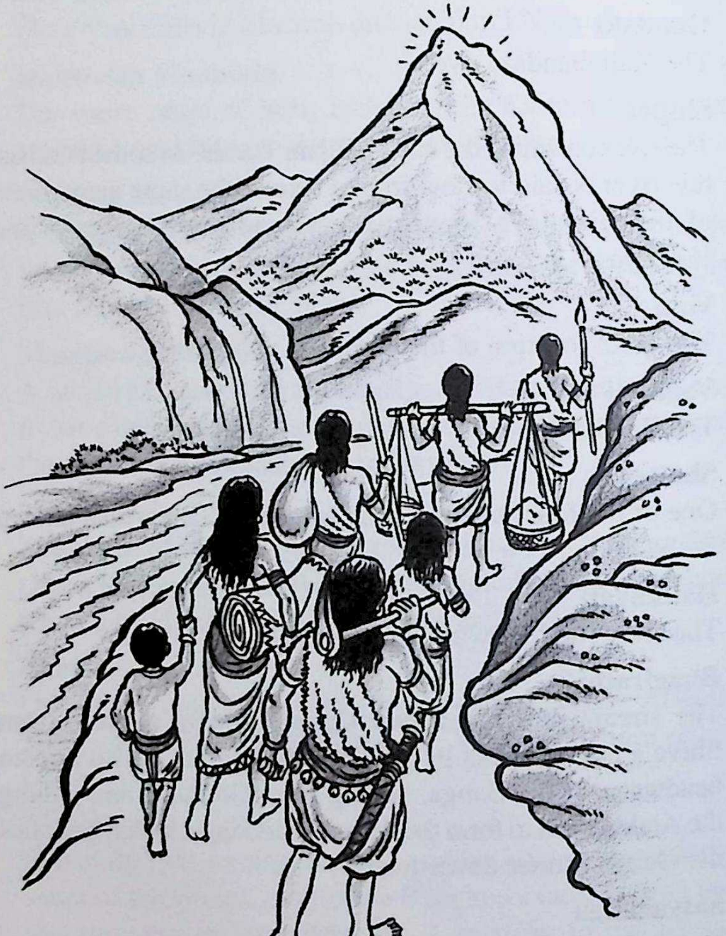
Haimavati
The river Ravi, flowing in the Punjab.

Bhagirathi
The stream of the heavenly Ganga brought to earth from Shiva's matted locks by the king Bhagiratha. Also a main headwater of the Ganga, issuing from Gomukh, and joining the Alakananda to form the Bhagirathi-Ganga, which becomes the Ganga further downstream.

Satyaganga
Possibly the river Kaushiki, which was also called the Satyavati.

2

How Human Beings Discovered the Wonderful Powers of the Himalaya



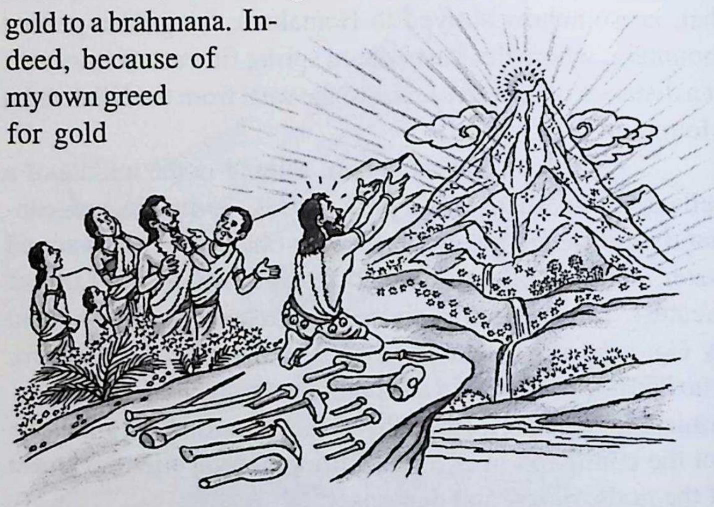
Long ago, there lived a certain *mleccha* known as Karanga. He supported himself and his family from prospecting for precious stones and ores. Along with his kin and servants, Karanga used to wander all the time in the mountains, looking for precious metals and minerals. Once in these wanderings, he reached the snow-clad Himavan.

Now, throughout his life this tribesman had been a rather sinful man, who never gave away anything in charity, nor engaged in any type of virtuous behavior. Yet in spite of that, he somehow strayed to Hemakuta, the golden-peaked mountain, where the Yashodhara spring flowed. It is located at a distance of three *yojanas* to the west from the Nilakantha Mountain.

On top of that mountain, shining in the middle of a pellucid pond, there was a pure crystal, divine lingam, constantly moistened by an everflowing oblation of sun-warmed water. The lingam was called Dravyeshvara (The Lord of Wealth). Long ago, this divine lingam had been worshipped by *Ganesha,* when out of envy of his own brother, *Skanda*, who had become the lord and commander-in-chief of the gods' armies, he had performed the great austerities by which he got the command over Shiva's troops, along with the praise of the gods, rishis, and demons.

Karanga, placing his mining tools on the ground, washed his hands, face and feet with the water flowing down from the top of the mountain. He quickly sprinkled his head with it, and finally quenched his thirst with the milk-like flow. Then, he rested for a while on the bank of the stream. It was the fourteenth day of the bright half of the lunar month of Shravana (Jul./Aug.). By now he and his kinfolk were all tormented by the cold, and suffering from hunger. They had nearly exhausted their provisions, and had difficulty finding any more food.

When Karanga looked up, he saw that the mountain in front of him was brimming with gold. Bewildered and stunned with joy, he immediately turned and started speaking to his followers in a stammering voice. Rising to his knees and bowing, Karanga cried out to them, "O my brother, my beloved, my sons! Look at that most excellent, munificent, gold-laden mountain in front of you! O, this is a stroke of good luck for us, helpless as we are! I can feel that only now, from the sight of this mountain, this life of mine, the life of a man who has indulged in many sins, has surely become fruitful! Never, my dear," he said, addressing his dumbfounded wife, "have we given in the past even once a gift of gold to a brahmana. Indeed, because of my own greed for gold I have been wandering in this world, bowed down by poverty. In this way, during many births I have reaped unbearable woes. What has happened to me now must surely be because of Shiva's mercy! When He saw me confused, and in the jaws of sorrow, He took pity on me. It must be because of some small residue of virtue from a previous birth that I happened to accidentally come here, to this place, and from its power, by its waters, I was cleansed of my sinful defilements. It seems that the Lord manifests here for us whatever we wish for, be it the exalted position of a yogi, or even an empire stretching to the waves of the sea. Look, son! Beloved! O brother! Look at this mountain, this repository of brilliance! Look at all those peaks, in the west, north and



east. Look at those peaks from which arose in ancient times the Kaushiki rivers, and Gandaki rivers, revered by the Gods! Bow down in reverence before it, then look at that mountain, all full of gold, shining with various gems. Look at all the wonderful peaks linked to it, like the thousand heads of a mountain-god! Just look!"

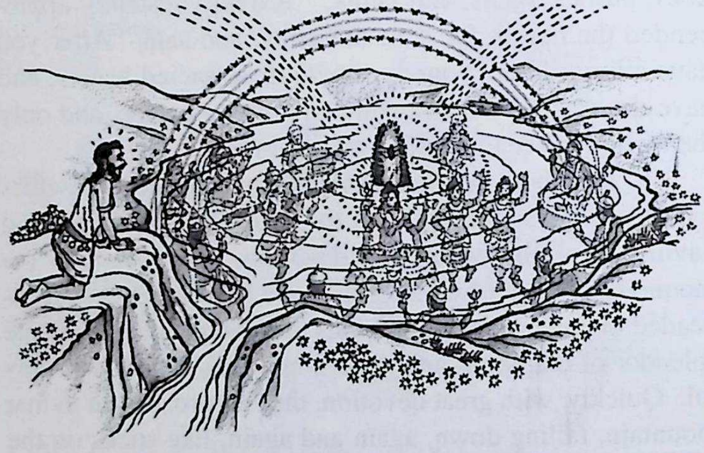
But the servants did not understand what the master was raving about, and replied, "O master, we do not see this mountain-king, full of gold that you are speaking of. The great mountain standing in front of us is covered only with trees, bushes, rocks, and chills." Karanga instantly apprehended the reason for their difficulty, and said, "After you have cleansed both your eyes with these sacred waters, and have drunk that water, bow down with reverence, and only then will you see the golden mountain."

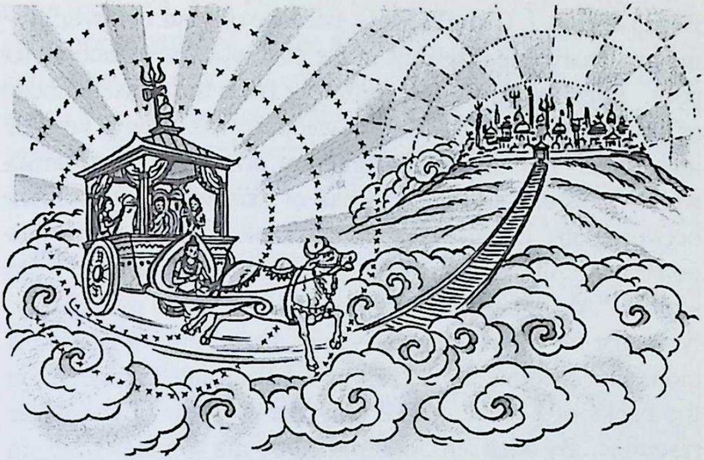
With both their hands, the others anointed themselves with the waters welling from the Gana Kunda above, and having drunk the water with devotion, they looked at the mountain in front of them. This time they saw a thousand-headed mountain, full of all kinds of riches, shining with the splendor of diamonds and jewels, and looking just wonderful. Quickly, with great devotion, they all prostrtated to that mountain, falling down, again and again, like sticks on the ground. Right then and there, those poor mountain-folk felt fulfilled to their heart's content.

Karanga left his servants and family behind, took a pick-axe, and in full view of them climbed the golden mountain all alone, occasionally resting when tired on the lower peaks. When he finally reached the top, Karanga sat there, and began to muse to himself like this, "After I have taken all this gold to the ground, having conquered the *kshatriyas* on earth, I will become famous all over the world."

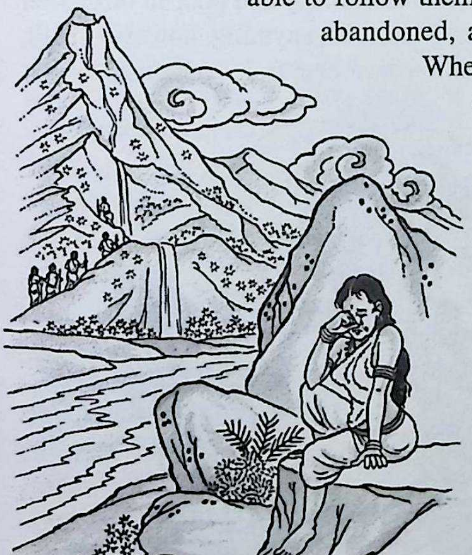
Climbing the summit further, he reached the Gana Kunda and, by sheer luck saw in the pond the crystal Shivalingam, standing in the water. He also saw an assemblage of gods regaling the 'The Lord in the Waters', Jaleshvara, with music. They were singing and dancing for him, with great rejoicing. He saw 'The Pot-Bellied' Ganesha, dancing with great elation, and the apsaras with the lotus-born Brahma, singing to 'The One Whose Banner is the Bull' (Shiva).

When the mleccha arrived on the bank near the pristine pond, flowers rained down from above, and music sounded in the sky. Out of the sky came Shiva's cohorts, with their hands resting on a heavenly chariot. It was brilliant like the sun, and illuminated everything in four directions. The Shaivites put the flabbergasted Karanga in the chariot. There, as befits a devotee of Shiva, he was fanned with *chowries* held in the swaying hands of Rudra maidens. With singing, and dancing, and great rejoicing, they all immediately took him, in his own mortal body which was shining in all directions with the luster of that wonderful chariot, to the city of Shiva. Later, in a similar manner, Shiva's legions took the servants and relatives of Karanga through the sky to the Supreme, where they enjoyed the highest pleasures of Shankara for a hundred eons. After that Karanga was reborn as king *Prithu*, who ruled the whole world, having subjugated all the other monarchs upon it by the power of the Gana Kunda.



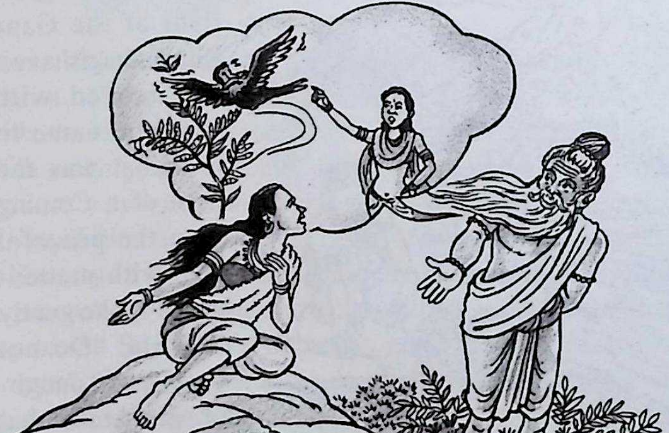


After Karanga and his entourage departed on heavenly chariots, his wife, Shila, was left standing there on the side of the miraculous stream flowing from the Gana Kunda. Shila looked apprehensively at the stream, and at her relatives and servants disappearing in the sky. Unable to follow them, she felt lonely and abandoned, and wept profusely. When he heard the sound of her lamenting, the rishi of the Gana Kunda, Jaigishavyya, was moved with pity, and came to see what was the cause of it. Coming near, the peaceful sage with matted-haired spoke gently to Shila, "Do not weep, poor daughter, just know that you are plagued by your past misdeeds.



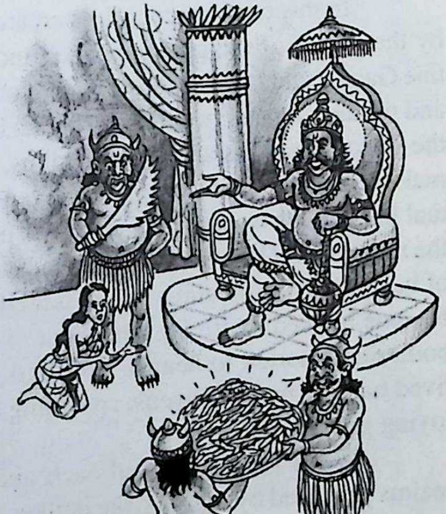
Because of that, O sinful Shila, because of your not ever giving any charitable offerings in the past, you have become so poor. Even today, you are suffering from the consequences of your own doings! Merely weeping won't help you, or any sinner. You must begin right now practicing that dharma which takes one across the ocean of existence!" To which, between sobs, the grieving woman replied, "I am alone and powerless without a husband or sons! She exclaimed with sorrow, "Ah, Where shall I go now? Where did they all go? Now that they have abandoned me, here I am, O Lord, left alone in a desolate jungle full of wild animals and birds, on the banks of a river, where only the murmur of the water resounds. By what sins, committed by me so many times in the past, am I tormented now? Or is this somehow the servants' fault? Tell me the truth, O twice-born one."

Jaigishavya sat Shila down and told her the following tale about herself, "You were once the wife of a farmer, and completely devoid of charitable impulses, and of dharma. Because of that, you became unlucky and poor in birth after birth. You did not give in the past anything, however small, to anybody, not a grain of rice, neither fruits, nor green leaves,



not even roots. You fed your own stomach only, with every grain of rice you had. In the Kali Yuga you became the owner and custodian of a fruit orchard, you lived in that garden and kept away with a stick all the birds and animals. When you were standing guard there once, a crow flew down and seized a pod from your garden. You immediately cursed like this, ‘May it be full of shit!” The crow flew off with that pod, and gave it for safe-keeping to Yama’s recorder, Chitragupta. Chitragupta kept it well in order to give it back to you when you died and arrived at his gate.

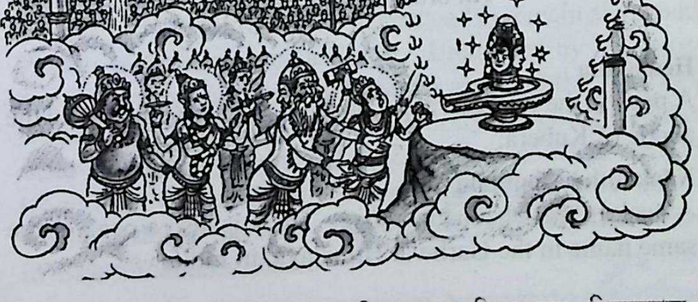
“At the end of your life, when you were brought to Yama’s city of Samyamani by his terrible messengers, you wailed profusely like this, ‘I am suffering from thirst, I am suffering from hunger!’ A pile of ten million pods, made by Yama from that original pod, was brought by his attendants,and Yama placed them in front of you saying, ‘Eat this!’ Breaking them open with your fingernails, one by one, you examined them all for some nourishment, but found them all to be full of excrement. You then became extremely upset. With your body scorched from hunger and thirst, you dove deep into the mansions of hell.



“After one hundred thousand years you were repeatedly reborn as a snake. Then again after another hundred thousand years you were born in a human womb, and received your present body. Indeed, it was on account of the merit of dying on the banks of the Ganga in your previous life, that they who have now flown away became the relations and dependents of yours, who brought you here. Ascending the Himalaya here, and obtaining a boon by the virtue of the power of my *tirtha*, as well as of the mountain, they departed for Shiva's paradise, and left your miserliness behind. O Shila, bathe in the waters of this stream, and then try to climb this mountain. In this way, you will surely attain that same state of utter sinlessness as they did, and you will get back your relatives and servants in the city of Shiva." After instructing her so, the sage explained to Shila the path of virtue. Finally, Jaigishavya departed to do tapas. When she heard Jagishavya's pronouncement, Shila made up her mind right then and there, and went slowly towards that tirtha. Then she climbed the mountain to the Gana Kunda. And consequently, she too, went bodily to the heaven of Shiva, in a chariot dazzling like the sun.

In this manner, countless creatures became liberated by the power of the golden-peaked mountain, and the pristine Gana Kunda, and by the power of other Himalayan peaks and tirthas. Tens of millions of human beings went bodily to the various heavens and higher realms. Twice as many animals went, and even more insects. Even those devoid of spiritual knowledge went to heaven by the power and blessing of the mountain. This went on for a thousand years. Multitudes of beings born in the three ways, ascended the Himalaya and became blessed by it. By the power of the place, they were bodily transported to heaven long ago. All these creatures lived happily in the heavens, spreading everywhere, and enjoying great delights.

When they witnessed each and every one of their realms pervaded by mortals, the deities, with Brahma at their head, assembled together, and out of exasperation, went to see Pashupati. When they arrived in Shiva's benevolent presence, Brahma, speaking for the whole group began by saying, "The authority, which was conferred upon us earlier, has now become a thankless task. I am the Begetter of all the creatures, and He is their Protector," the Creator said, pointing at Vishnu. "But now, O Lord, everywhere the seats of the Gods are filled by mortals in the flesh! Now, for a hundred thousand years our Himalaya will be full of mortals, like animals, birds and deer, not to mention human beings. If they all go bodily to heaven, without having performed any ritual bathing, or charitable deeds, or worship (snana, dana, archana), then what will happen? Our abodes will always be full of mortals. The wise, who are possessed of spiritual knowledge should be liberated, but instead, the realms of the Gods will be filled by the foolish and base." Pashupati listened graciously to Brahma's irritated voice, and then said to Vishnu, and all the gods, "The inevitable fruit must be reaped by those who perform austerities. Because of the touch of the mountain, these creatures, having obtained its boons, are reaching your abodes. Please do not be distressed by that, O Hari, a remedy will be found. Inevitably though, all those people who dwell on the Himalaya mountain must attain heaven, be they foolish or wise. But from now on, this will



happen soon after they have left their physical bodies. As for those true *tapasvis* living on the Himalayan peaks, who perform austerities to you, or me, even once, I will raise them up bodily to the highest bliss. Let there be no dispute about that."

When they heard Pashupati's words, the gods brimmed with joy. They bowed down with devotion to the luminous lingam of light, and circumambulated it with great reverence. Then all the gods returned to their respective realms.

From that moment onwards, creatures living on the Himalaya went to heaven after death, without especially doing any virtuous acts. It is said that even those who listen unwaveringly to this story of the greatness of Himavan, will themselves soon obtain glory and fame, nourishment, wealth and longevity on earth. Whatever merit there is in the Himalaya– that, they will attain.

Location of places mentioned in the story

(in order of appearance)

Hemakuta
A peak in the Kailash range, north of Mount Kailash, and the abode of Kubera.

Nilakantha Mountain
A peak in the Dhaulagiri range. There is also a peak of the same name in the Garhwal Himalaya, in India.

3

How Shiva, as Pashupati, Settled in the Sacred Valley of Nepal

Long ago, in the golden age when gods played on earth–and in the Himalaya, even today, they still do–the valley of Nepal was renowned as Shleshmantaka Forest, because of the austerities performed there at the beginning of the age by a *Naga* called Shleshmantaka. The whole valley was lavishly covered with a profusion of trees, like sala trees, palmyras, tamala trees, and date-palms, brightened here and there with the flashing of orange and lemon trees laden with fruit. It sparkled with groves of shade trees, with creepers and many varieties of jasmine, blooming with the most beautiful flowers. The forest resounded with the songs of all kinds of birds, with the buzzing of the bees, and with the murmurs of many rippling waterfalls. It teemed with herds of wild boar passing through it together with flocks of deer, with monkeys playing high up in its trees, with lions and tigers stalking its depths.

Once upon a time, Shankara came to Shleshmantaka Forest with his consort, Parvati, the daughter of the Himalaya mountain. After visiting the lovely groves, while resting with his beloved on the banks of the Vagmati river, with all kinds of flowers blooming everywhere, Shiva felt that he was developing an unparalleled fondness for the place. He immediately resolved not to return to his two traditional abodes: the holy city of Varanasi, and the enchanting environs of Mount Kailasha, but instead to remain along with Parvati in Shleshmantaka Forest. Unnoticed by his troops and followers, the formidable Shiva assumed the form of a wondrous deer, with a spotted body of golden luster, three-eyes, a single horn, long ears, perfect teeth and a bright, tremulous gaze. At the same time, Parvati became a winsome doe at his side. Together they dallied undisturbed in Shleshmantaka Forest.

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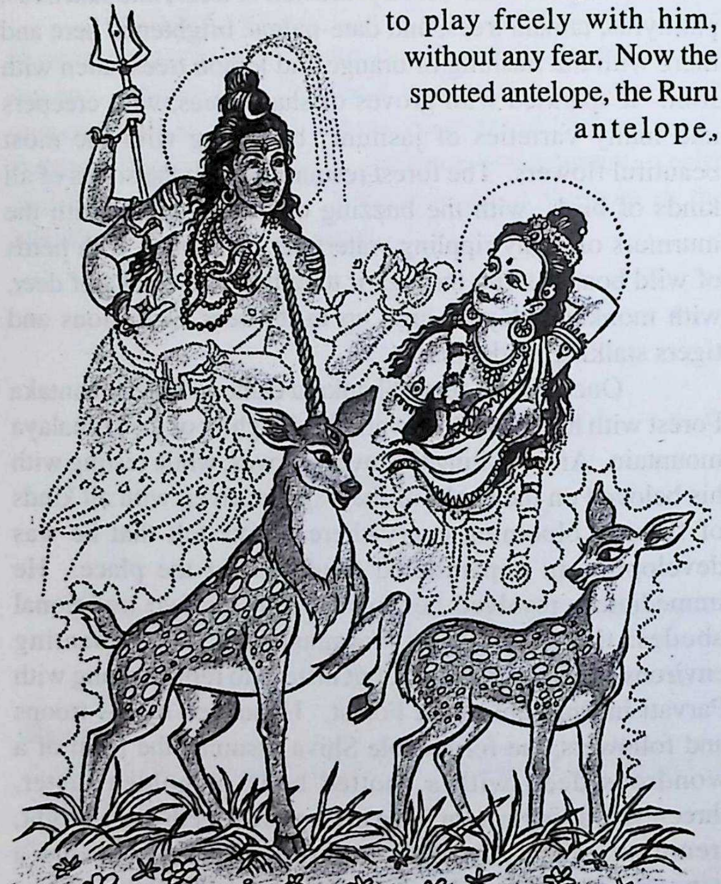
After he appeared there, this superlative deer noticed some other deer in the lovely countryside. Roaming as he pleased, Shiva entered a flock of deer, and started grazing heartily alongside them. Though in the beginning they were intimidated by his presence among them, having observed him with their hearts and minds, the other deer left behind their fears of offending Shiva in some way, by bumping into him, or by even just stepping in front of him. Once the deer realized that this Supreme deer meant them no harm, they were able to play freely with him, without any fear. Now the spotted antelope, the Ruru antelope,



and the Nyanku deer in the forest, all delighted, played happily at their will in the thickets and at the foot of the trees. They would roam often in the caves and caverns, and tread in the waters of the Vagmati.

The other deer felt intimidated at first, but soon they thought to themselves, "We have just attained one of life's most lofty goals. Our abode here will become very holy from His association with it. Having made Him our leader, we must place Him at the head of our flock immediately." The deer completely laid aside their worries, and gladly became the magnificent stag's followers, going wherever Shiva in the body of a deer roamed. The flocks of deer were soon drawn into frolicking with Shiva all over the forest. The genial deer who were guarding the flock, immediately made him one of their own. They would delightedly lick him, and scratch his body and limbs affectionately with their own mouths, as if Shiva's deer-body were their own. Together they would dance and play.

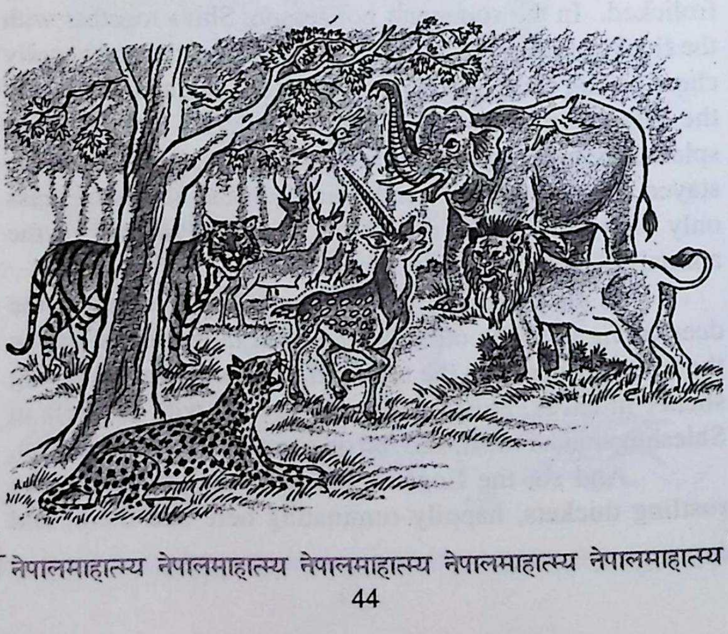
The Protector of all the animals gamboled along with the other deer a great deal in places strewn here and there with different flowers and creepers, smelling them as they frolicked. In the summer's hot season, Shiva together with the flocks of deer, would drink water frequently, and happily chew on the fresh green grasses, wandering and playing in the glens and vales. The god in a deer's body sported splendidly in the forest, attended upon by all the deer. He stayed mostly in caves, and grazed on the blades of grass only once daily. The rest of the day, the Protector of the animals played constantly.

In the same way, in the autumn, the foremost of the deer, along with the other deer, played in the forest, eating the fruits falling from the trees. In the winter, mostly taking shelter in caves, Shiva wandered together with the deer in Shleshmantaka Forest, and fed on grass and roots, and so on.

And so, the Lord in a deer's body stayed in the rustling thickets, happily ruminating here and there, and sporting together with the other deer. In some places, when they beheld the Supreme animal approaching, all the creepers suddenly overflowed with lovely flowers, and all the trees instantly bore fruit. Cool and fragrant breezes blew softly and slowly through the forest all the time. Wherever the deer went, the astonished trees,taking a good look at him, stretched out their branches as if craning their necks, and rained showers of flowers happily aiming at Shiva.

It was astonishing to watch how the sun, when it spotted him, shone down wonderfully, and with such tenderness, as if it had set its mind on that wonderful deer's comfort alone. In the same way, in the coldest season, the cool-rayed moon, looking down from the sky at the wonderful form of the Protector of all the animals, kindly shed its light with hardly a touch of snow.

Having beheld Shiva's wonderful spotted body, the birds became arrested in their flight, and remained where they were in the air. When they saw him, the animals were stopped in their tracks right where they stood, thinking, "When will we ever again have the opportunity to see such an astonishing deer?" The rhinoceroses, the elephants, the

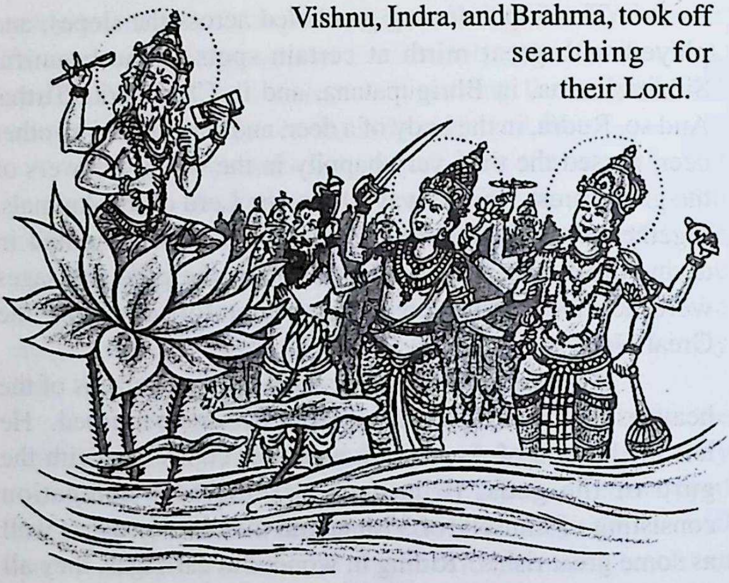


wolves, the wild boars, the jackals and monkeys all became awed bystanders, along with the lions, the leopards, the bears and the tigers. They were never able to impede or threaten the movement of that fortunate flock of deer.

The Supreme stag gamboled across the slopes, and played with great mirth at certain spots in the beautiful Siddhashrama, in Bhrigupatana, and in Chandrarka Tirtha. And so, Rudra, in the body of a deer, and surrounded by other deer, passed the time very happily in the solitary bowers of the great forest. In this way Shiva, the Lord of the Animals, together with all the creatures of the forest, delighted in divine diversions for ten celestial years, the gods and sages were deprived of the blessing and comfort of seeing the Great God.

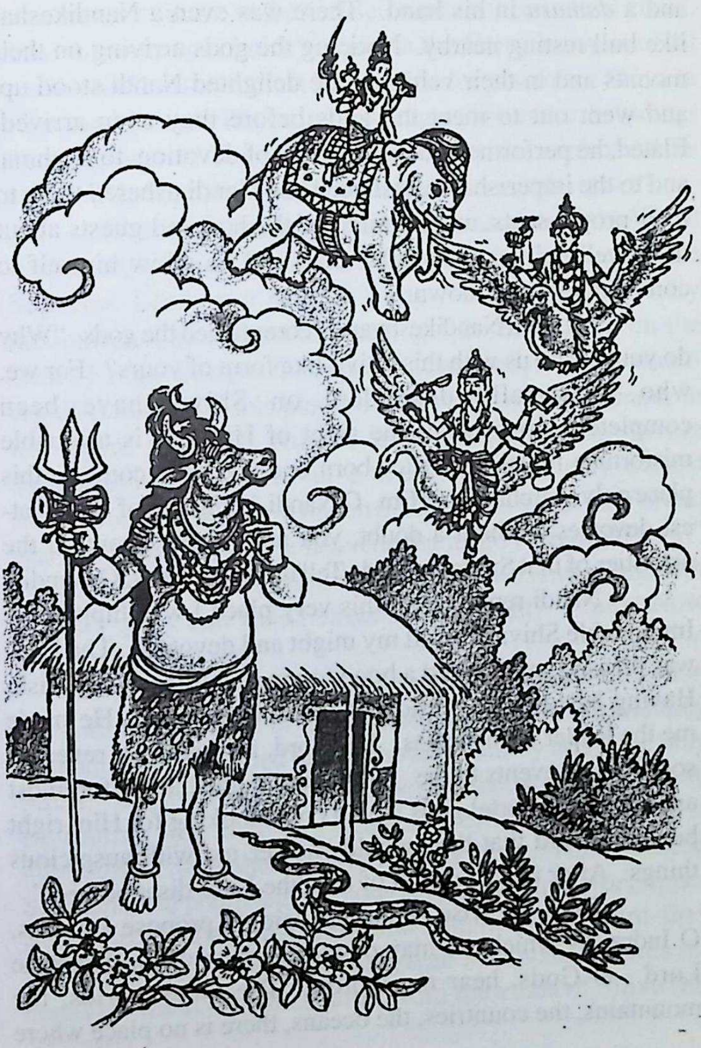
When, after a long time, none of the denizens of the heavens had seen Shiva, Lord Indra became perturbed. He left his heaven of Amaravati, and after consulting with the guru of the gods, Brihaspati, assembled a delegation consisting of himself, of Vishnu and the other gods, as well as some great rishis. Riding in wonderful carriages, they all went to pay their respects to Brahma. Indra, speaking for the whole assembly, decorously addressed the Creator, "O Lord who shines like the inside of a lotus, O Lotus-born One who assuredly is not born from any womb, only you can protect us from this anguish of not seeing Shiva. Without *Shambhu,* no work of the world is being accomplished well, O Self-born One. These days, we never seem to glimpse that kindly Shiva, who is the apple of the people's eye. If the secret of his disappearance becomes known to the demons, O Lord of all the brahmanas, they will greedily hijack my kingdom, for sure!"

"O Hari," said Brahma, "We must all go look for Shambhu right now! There is nothing else to do. We will trace Him somewhere, in one of the worlds. Somewhere, O Gods, on the seven continents, on the mountains, or in the caves, we shall certainly find Him! Do not be distressed, Indra. O Divine Ones," said the Creator to the delegation of celestials, "You must mount your vehicles, and depart immediately in search for Him." After Brahma's exhortation, everybody, including Vishnu, Indra, and Brahma, took off searching for their Lord.



In this way the gods went to search in Rudra's realm, and in the Arya realm, in Shakra's realm, and in the realm of Brahma, in Vishnu's realm, in Skanda's, in Ganapati's realm and in the Moon's realm, and in the realm of the lunar constellations (nakshatra), and to other realms, like the realm of Yama and also the realm of the Sun, and that of Kubera. Brahma and the gods scoured all the directions, but nowhere could they find that Supreme God, neither in the lands on the seven continents, nor in the oceans. The gods could not find the Supreme Shiva anywhere at all!

Finally, they sought him on the mountains in the northern direction. They arrived at the Himalaya, and began searching its valleys. As they were searching, Narada saw from the sky Nandikesha on the summit of Munjavan Mountain. Nandi had just received a boon from Shiva to be the leader of his troops, and to be able to assume a Rudra-like form. By mistake, Narada thought that the foremost Nandikesha was Shiva himself, and he immediately called out to the gods, "O Lords, I am looking at Rudra! The Lord is living happily on the lovely summit of Munjavan Mountain."



Brahma and all the gods were overjoyed. They hastened in their carriages to where Nandikesha was sitting on the mountain. But when they came closer, the gods realized that they are looking at Nandikesha, who was but a reflection of the Great God, similar in appearance to him, with three eyes, matted locks upon his head, and holding a trident and a *damaru* in his hand. There was even a Nandikesha-like bull resting nearby. Noticing the gods arriving on their mounts and in their vehicles, the delighted Nandi stood up, and went out to meet the gods before they even arrived. Elated, he performed obeisances full of devotion, to Brahma, and to the imperishable Vishnu. Then Nandi ushered them to their proper seats, and inquired of the honored guests about their well-being. Only after that did he allow himself to comfortably settle down.

"O Lord Nandikeshvara!" complained the gods, "Why do you torture us with this Shiva-like form of yours? For we, who are totally dependent on Shiva, have been completely deprived of the sight of Him. It is a terrible misfortune for us! O twice-born one, we have come to this place only searching for Him. O Nandi, being one of His greatest devotees, without a doubt, you must know about all the activities of that Supreme God. Tell us where He is, O Nandi."

Nandi replied, "At this very place I worshipped the Immovable Shiva with all my might and devotion. The Lord was pleased and granted a boon to me according to my wish. Having bestowed a portion of Himself upon me, He made me the leader of his ganas. The Lord, furthermore, revealed some future events to me. He even told me that the foremost among the immortal gods would come looking for Him right here. He said that they would shower me with auspicious things. After telling me all of this, the Lord disappeared."

Then, the wise Brihaspati said, "I propose a means, O Indra, by which we may obtain *darshan* of the Supreme Lord. O Gods, hear my words! The three worlds, the mountains, the countries, the oceans, there is no place where we have not gone. We are depressed and tormented, and unable to see Him, you know, Sir. Who can truly see Him, except Vishnu and Brahma?" Then Indra said, "Ah, such true words have just been spoken by our guru, O Gods. What he said to us is absolutely appropriate, and if we follow it, it will lead us towards His darshan. O Lord Brahma, salutations to Thee, to the Consciousness of cause and effect. Salutations to you, Lord Vishnu, to the Consciousness of all causes. O Creator, it must be possible for you to see Shiva in your meditation. Please tell us where Shambhu is hiding! By the power of Yoga, quickly look over the surface of the earth. O Lord, please ease our tormented minds, now!"

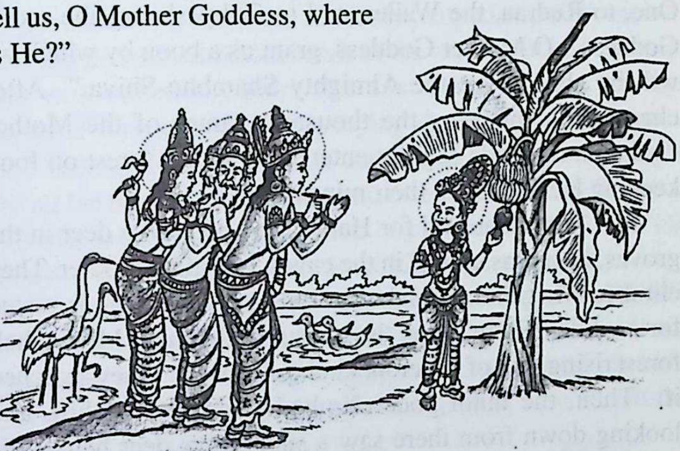
Hearing Indra's words, the Grandfather of the World meditated, and in samadhi he saw with his own eyes, the Supreme Lord in a radiant body. Staying completely motionless, like a pond of sleeping fish, meditating on the Lord of Yoga, Brahma then spoke these words, "In the southern direction from this place, at a distance of one *yojana*, in the lap of the great Himalaya, at the foot of the lovely Siddhadri Hill, there is a wooded sanctuary called Shleshmantaka. I have a hunch that Shiva is there. O Vishnu, and Lords of the highest heavens, let us go there right now." Hearing Brahma's words, and with their hearts swelling with joy, the gods and rishis exclaimed, "Right! True! Now success will be ours!"

From where they were standing, with divine vision the gods caught sight of that Shleshmantaka Forest, and they immediately exclaimed to one another, "Surely this is the holy forest! Really it is!" When they saw the wonderful forest, enchanting like their own heavenly realms, they started to hurry there, with their hearts longing to see Him. Just as Shambhu had predicted, the gods besprinkled and worshipped Nandikesha with devotion, and together with him they resolutely descended from Munjavan Mountain towards the banks of that river which arose from the voice of Shiva (the Vagmati).

Wandering along the bank of the Vagmati in the southern direction, the search party of gods and rishis beheld a heavenly scene ahead of them. On the river's shores they saw thickets of banana trees everywhere, made more lovely by other blooming trees. It was a beautiful setting, with ducks and cranes swimming in the water. The river Vagmati shone with bright waves. Fragrant with pleasant smelling blossoms, its waters were full of various water flowers. The sweet humming of the bees resounded in the air. There on the bank, the gods saw a matchless young maiden, glowing like the unsullied full-moon. She was playing near the river's current, building a sacrificial altar from the spotless sand, which was shining like powdered pearls. The maiden, with a smiling face, radiant like the moon, had delicate and perfect limbs. The corners of her eyes were shaped like the petals of a blue lotus, and her lips were red like Bimba fruit. This glorious young girl had the most wonderful eyes, and was endowed with every auspicious sign the gods could think of. Dressed in heavenly garments, and adorned with astonishing jewelry, she was more beautiful than millions of apsaras, and more radiant than millions of suns. Looking at her marvelous solitary figure glittering on the bank, surpassing in brilliance every celestial maiden, Brahma, Vishnu and Indra were at first astonished, and then utterly fascinated by her. In no time their hearts were captured by the lass, and they fell into a state of total bewilderment. The other gods were stupefied as well, gazing at the beautiful divine young thing with eyes like those of a doe. They all stood there, with wide opened eyes, completely still like the gods in a painting.

Urged on by Vishnu and Indra, Brahma, with questions in his mind because of her sublime beauty, and other good qualities, spoke these words, "O maiden, why do you live alone in this dense forest? Please tell us now, who are you? Endowed with all the beauty you have, surely, you must be Parvati! O auspicious lady with sacred smiles on your lips, have you seen the Lord of the Universe anywhere?

Our worlds shine not without Shiva, O Mother. For a long time we have not seen Shambhu, the Support of the world, who is Hara, the Destroyer of the world, too. Having sought Him in all the lands, in the mountains and caves, we, tormented ones, have now come here, yearning to see Him. The Supreme Lord must be somewhere near you. Please tell us, O Goddess, O reverend One, for where *Bhavani* is, there is *Bhava,* without a doubt. Do please tell us, O Mother Goddess, where is He?"



The lovely maiden looked at them demurely, and in a quiet, yet resonant voice, which was music to their ears, said, "Towards the southwest, on the soft, grassy, and broad western bank of the Vagmati, bursting with all kinds of flowers, full of different types of trees and creepers, you will find Hara in the body of a deer, roaming in the company of numerous deer, O Brahma." Having said this, the Goddess disappeared into the ground. All that was left for the gods to stare at was the hole into which she had vanished.

The gods propitiated the Goddess in three ways–by placing their hands reverentially together at their foreheads, by repeatedly circumambulating the hole in the ground, and by praying like this, "Obeisances be always to you, O Mother Goddess! Obeisance be to Bhavani, The Giver of Existence, who is both in manifested and unmanifested form.

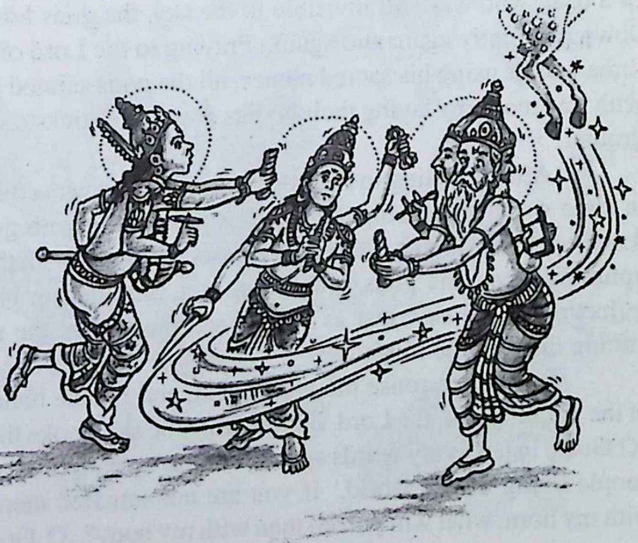
Obeisance be to Katyayani, the Widow in red, to Kaladhatri, the Holder of Time, to Ambika, the Mother, and to Shiva, the auspicious One. Obeisance be to you, who is both in the form of illusion, and beyond illusion, and who can destroy the illusions of those bewildered by Her. Obeisance be to the Reverend One, who manifests as the Sovereign Power of the universe, and as its Supreme Deluder, as well. Obeisance be to the One who is called by the names, Guhya, the secret One, to Rudraa, the Wailer, and to Guhyeshvari, the secret Goddess. O Mother Goddess, grant us a boon by which we will be able to see the Almighty Shambhu-Shiva." After chanting in this way the thousand names of the Mother Goddess, the gods eagerly entered the dense forest on foot, keeping Her words in their minds.

They searched for Hara in the body of a deer in the groves, in crevasses and in the caves, one after another. They climbed Mrigakuta tableland. Being tired, the gods rested for a while. From there, the gods saw the great Mrigasthali forest rising, full of different kinds of flowers. They searched it. Then, the main gods climbed a large steep hill, and looking down from there saw a superlative deer below. He was blissfully resting on a rock, surrounded by other deer, shining like the golden Mt. Meru among all the lesser mountains. The marvelous deer had a single horn, and one of his shapely legs was in view. He had a beautiful face with lovely eyes and teeth. His underside, neck and abdomen were spotlessly white, but his back and flanks had no trace of white at all. They glittered with shining spots. His shoulders and waist were bulging and raised. His lips were red as the Bimba fruit, and the mouth and tongue were coppery red. His teeth were shining like sprouts. Every part of that deer's body was dappled with lustrous hair, full of beauty.

Then the gods laid themselves down in reverence, like sticks on the ground, and began to recite prayers slowly in their minds, "Om, a reverent salutation to Shiva, to Rudra, to the Lord of all beings, to *Sharva*, in the form of an animal, who is the Protector of the animals. Obeisances to You, again and again." At the end of these prayers they all cried out, "O Lord, we bow down utterly to your feet! For your refuge we now come! O Almighty Hara, protect and preserve us, who have come to you for shelter!"

Then suddenly, all the gods rushed down the hill like one man. With the intention of catching him, they blocked the divine deer from all directions. Quickly and unobserved, Brahma, Vishnu, and Indra suddenly jumped out of the crowd, and caught hold with both hands of the wonderful horn, firmly, but with affection. Indra was first to get hold of the tip, Brahma followed him by grasping the middle of the horn, and Vishnu held down its root. As soon as the horn was caught by all the three gods, it broke into three pieces, with Brahma, Vishnu, and Indra each holding one. The Great God in the body of a deer immediately leapt high up into the sky.

The gods followed with their eyes the splendid deer leaping into the sky, until he disappeared. Then they turned their eyes towards Vishnu, hoping to get some cue from him, but when they saw Vishnu sad and dejected, they all felt the

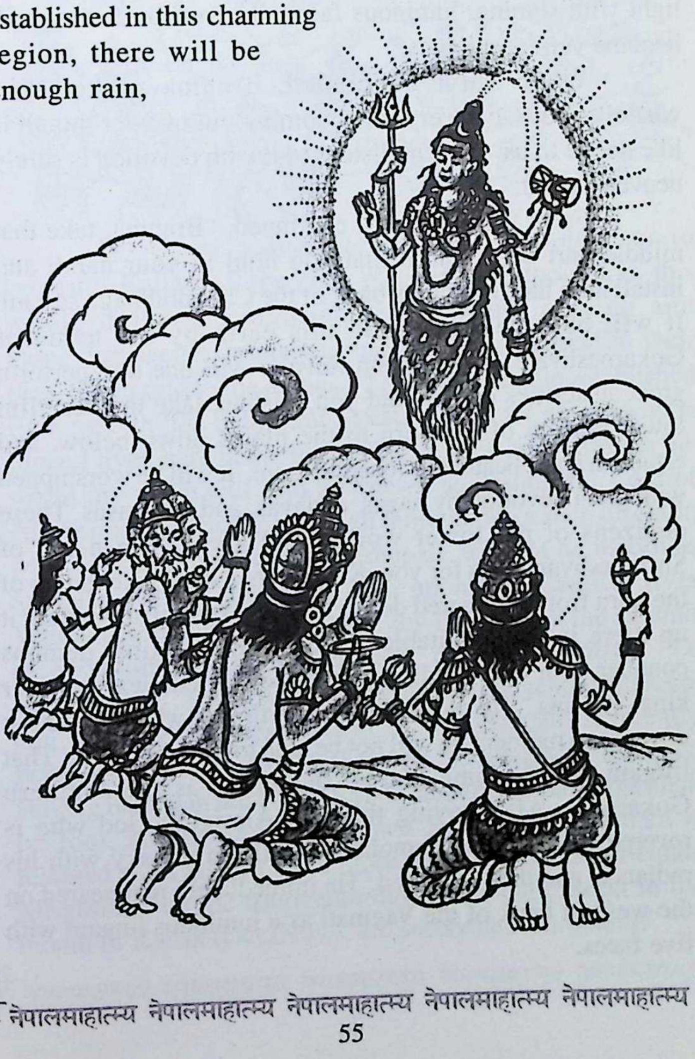


same way. They turned their faces once more towards the sky, searching for Shiva. Folding their hands respectfully at their foreheads, they prayed, "Obeisance upon obeisance to the illustrious One staying in the sky in the form of a deer. Obeisance upon obeisance to Him who has one horn and three eyes. Obeisance to Him who is adorned with large, pointed, shiny teeth, and whose feet are unique, who is in the form of an excellent animal, but who can release one from animal birth. Obeisance to the Lord of animals, playing among the animals. Obeisance be to you, O Supreme Lord in the form of an animal, moving about willingly in the holy forest with your fierce cohorts assuming the forms of animals. Obeisance to Him, who is the root cause of people's liberation, whose form is unique, who alone is able to grant any boon, and whose state is always benevolent. Obeisance be always to you, who is the Lord of all the animals, and who is the Protector of the devotees. Appear to us from the sky, O Great God. Graciously show yourself to us, who have come to your shelter."

Having prayed in this manner to Shambhu in the form of a deer, who was still invisible in the sky, the gods bowed down reverently again and again. Praying to the Lord of the three worlds using his sacred names, all the gods saluted him with reverence, by laying their bodies down like sticks on the ground.

After listening to the gods' excellent prayer, offered in three ways, and seeing their bodies prostrating with great devotion, the Almighty Lord was pleased. Finally, with their upturned faces, the gods saw Shiva in a shimmering body reflecting in the sky, just as people see the sun in the sky cutting through the mists.

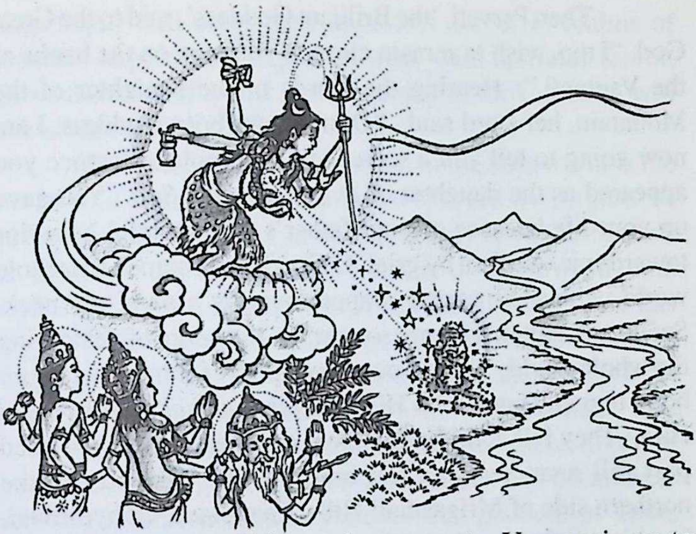
In order to rouse the gods again, and for the benefit of the whole world, the Lord, illuminating the sky, spoke thus, "O Gods, listen to my words spoken for the welfare of all the people living in this world. If you are not satisfied merely with my horn, what will you do then with my body? O Gods, listen to my words, which are for your own awakening. At the end of my play on earth in a deer's body, the perfect dharma on all its four feet has been established. All will attain liberation in this age by it. This land will be holy, and people will come here to live. O Brahma, the effort you have made will never go in vain. The pieces of my horn will be the means, employed by you, Sirs, to establish my lingams. Once my lingam form is established in this charming region, there will be enough rain,



and an abundant supply of provisions. Here, in my very holy region destroying all the evil deeds of men, as many tirthas and sacred pools as there are on earth stretching towards the sea, at my command as they will all come here, to this very place, right from their very sources, be they on a mountain or in a cave. O foremost Gods, there will always be countless holy places here, containing within them the sparks of those numberless tirthas. And when I reside here as a lingam of light with shining, luminous faces, this realm of mine will become very auspicious."

When Shiva concluded, Brahma spoke, "Sir, whatever you say, every word coming out of your mouth is like nectar to us. He who listens to it with devotion is surely heaven-bound."

From the sky, Shiva continued, "Brahma, take that middle part of my horn that you hold in your hand, and install it on the auspicious bank of the Chandrabhaga stream. It will become famous on this earth by the name of Gokarneshvara. The demon *Ravana* will one day perform great austerities there. And you, Vishnu, take the beautiful lower portion of the horn to the plains down below, and establish it at a beauteous location there. It will be worshipped with great devotion by nagas, danavas, and rakshasas. These denizens of the lower worlds will give it the name of Shringeshvara. As for you, King of the Gods, take the tip of the horn from my sacred deer's body to Amaravati, and set it up there in some suitable place. The next time demons conquer your city, the lingam will be carried away by their king, Ravana. He will take it to earth and when he puts it down for a moment he will not be able to move it again. That lingam will become known thereafter as the southern Gokarna." After saying this, the Almighty God who is revered by gods and demons alike, lit up the sky with his radiance, and then vanished. He immediately reappeared on the western bank of the Vagmati as a luminous lingam with five faces.



"O Great Shiva, please go to Varanasi, or to beautiful Kailasha," the gods pleaded. "Without you, this whole universe comprising everything moving and unmoving seems desolate to us." Having listened to their plea, Shiva said to the deities, "I intend to remain established right here in this delightful forest. I will not go anywhere. Since I lived here in the form of an animal, henceforth in the world my name will also be known as Pashupati, 'Lord of All Animals'. By my grace, all those gods, or men on earth, who reverently behold me, Pashupati, will not be reborn as animals. Those men who gaze upon the beautiful river Vagmati, which originated from my laughter on the summit of Mrigendrashikhara Mountain, partake of virtue. O, Brahmadeva! Those who, after going to Mrigendrashikhara, and drinking the sacred water of the Vagmati, reverently behold me, Pashupati, will never be reborn as animals. Having bathed in the Pashu Kunda, and traversed Mrigasthali on foot, and having worshipped Kirateshvara, a man is released from all sins. And those men who circumambulate Mrigasthali on the fourteenth day of the dark moon in the month of Kartik (Oct./Nov.), are surely heaven-bound!"

Then Parvati, 'the Brilliant Goddess', said to the Great God, "I too, wish to remain close to you here on the banks of the Vagmati." Hearing the words of the Daughter of the Mountain, her Lord said,, "O mountain-born Goddess, I am now going to tell you a secret. In a previous existence you appeared as the daughter of *Daksha,* called *Sati*. You gave up your life because of your father's disrespectful behavior towards me. Shaken by grief, O Goddess, I roamed the whole world, with your corpse draped lovingly around my neck. Seeing me agitated by my sorrow, on the verge of destroying the whole world, Vishnu, out of sympathy for me cut up your body in many parts with His *Sudarshana chakra* as I passed Him. They fell at different places on earth. Your concealed part fell near here, on the bank of the Vagmati, on the northern side of Mrigasthali Hill. That place, Guhyeshvari, is a great holy spot, indeed!

O Parvati, it is because of your affectionate love for me that you wish to live here with me. For that reason, O lovely-faced lady, from now may you be known here as Vatsala–'the Goddess who is affectionate like a cow towards her calf'. May you always be housed to the south-east of me, Great Goddess. May those people who, after taking a holy bath in the waters of the Vagmati and reverently beholding you, the 'Affectionate Goddess', also worshipfully gaze upon me, ultimately reach my heaven at Kailasha. Those who practice the repetition of sacred mantras with devotion in my proximity, or near to you, or near to your Guhyeshvari form, will definitely succeed in their endeavors." After hearing these benevolent words of Shiva, Parvati settled there on the western bank of the Vagmati river, near to Pashupati.

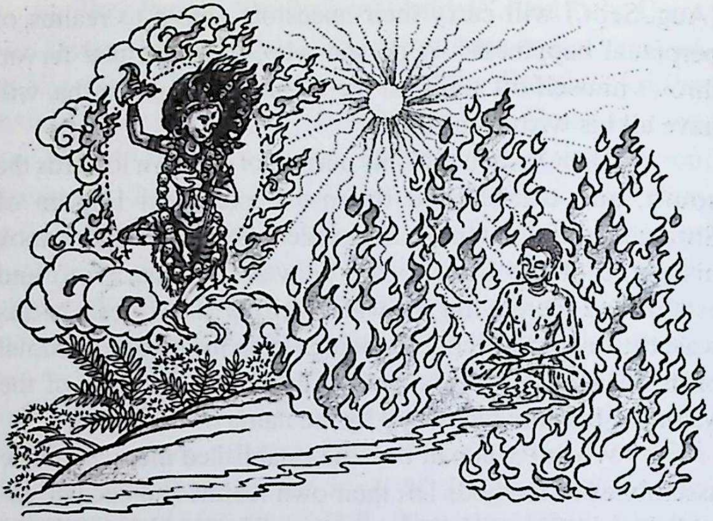
Brahma took his piece of that horn which releases beings from the bonds of animal birth, and high on the lovely bank of the Vagmati, towards the north, he established Gokarneshwara lingam, which rescues beings from all sins. Those who make *pinda* offerings there to the Progenitors on the fifteenth day of the dark half of the lunar month of Bhadra

(Aug./Sept.) will carry their ancestors across to realms of perpetual happiness. A person who, with spiritual fervor, throws himself off a cliff in the vicinity of Gokarnesha, will have all his wishes fulfilled.

Then Vishnu took his portion of the horn towards the south, and established the most excellent lingam of Shringeshwara. It too, is an excellent holy spot. Indra took his piece of the horn to his heaven of Amaravati, and established there a lingam which fulfills all wishes. In this way, the lingam which frees beings from the bonds of animal birth, located in Shleshmantaka Forest on the bank of the Vagmati, became renowned by the name of Pashupati.

When Pashupati became established there, all those assemblies of the gods left their own realms and became established in Shleshmantaka Forest. The goddess of Time, Kalika Devi, came from Radha to Shleshmantaka Forest, and became famous in that sacred place as Jayavagishvari. Those who become Her devotees will attain the supreme state. And any woman, who honors the Goddess there with a swan will follow her deceased husband to the city of Yama (see Glossary, Samyamani). Rajarajeshvari Shivaa came from Tripura. Simply from seeing Her, a poor man becomes very happy. Having left the lowest part of *Patala* the best of the Nagas *Vasuki*, became established to the north of Pashupati, surrounded by his attendants.

Vishnu in the form of Buddha, the self-controlled One, also came from Saurashtra, and performed austerities on the Manidhatu Mountain. From the excessive amounts of perspiration borne out of his ascetic practice of sitting in meditation surrounded by four furiously burning sacred fires, with the sun as a fifth fire burning over his head, a river called the Manimati was suddenly born. Parvati was so pleased by the austerities performed by the Buddha, that she appeared to him as the Buddhist goddess Vajrayogini, the 'Indestructible Yogini', and bade the Buddha to ask her for a boon.

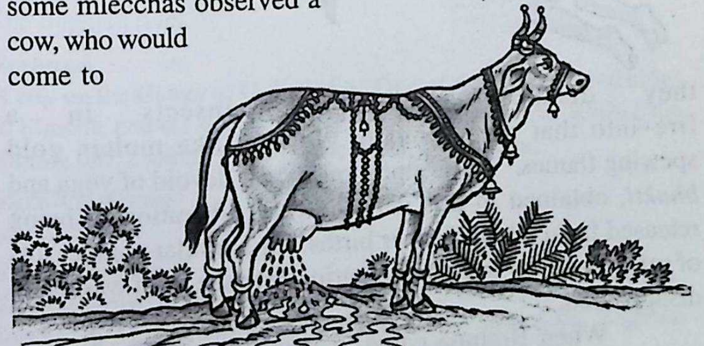


When he heard the words of the daughter of the mountain, the Lord Buddha requested, "May there always be in this land people devoted to the Buddhist path of right conduct." Parvati, 'the Goddess tender towards her devotees', listened to Buddha's request, and declared to him, "Since you performed your austerities in this holy place created by Shiva, in the future, those devoted to Shaivism and those devoted to Buddhism, will both peacefully live here in this most virtuous pilgrimage place. Have no doubt." She also requested the Buddha to establish a lingam at the confluence of the Vagmati and Manimati rivers. And the compassionate Buddha, having heard the words of the daughter of the mountain established Karunikeshvara lingam at the confluence. At the very spot where Parvati appeared to the Buddha, she still remains on the mountain enshrined for the benefit of Her devotees as Vajrayogini. And so, out of love for Pashupati, all the gods settled in the auspicious Shleshmantaka Forest.

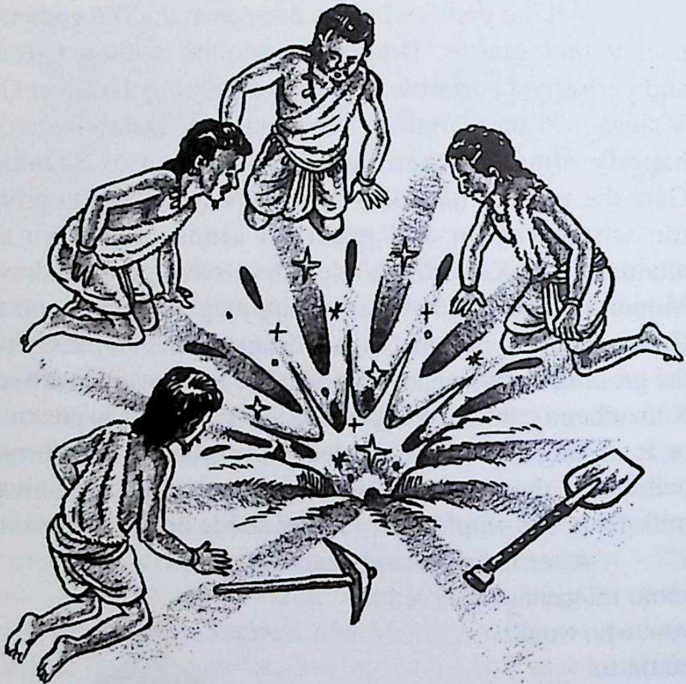
The gods beheld Pashupati as a luminous lingam of light, a bright and beautiful lingam as long as a bow. In order to always be near Him, the gods built a very beautiful metropolis full of gold, for all of them to live in. The gods called it Maheshvarapuri. The city shining with gems and rubies was also called Pashupatipuri. The lingam shone there like a flame fueled with ghee, looking like a pearl situated in the center of a golden lotus. By the end of the Dvapara yuga, that golden city eventually turned into a city of soil, rock. brick and wood. By the time of the Kali yuga, the jyotirlingam had sunk completely into the ground.

All the gods and gems disappeared. The gods went back to their realms. Brahma went to the southern Gokarna and performed austerities there, worshipping the Great God. Vishnu flew on Garuda to the summit of Dolashikara, and happily remained there. At the command of Shankara, Ganesha went to the southwest and stayed there to protect the whole region and grant all kinds of powers and attainments. *Kamadhenu* went to a cave on Chandravan Mountain, and lived there worshipping Pashupati and the Goddess. The luminous lingam disappeared completely into the ground, and the place around it became covered with soil. Kamadhenu continued to come to that spot daily, to pour milk on it, aiming at the Shiva buried in the ground. After herself bathing in the waters of the Vagmati, and giving Shiva a milk-bath, she would return to her abode on the mountain.

After ten thousand years some mlecchas observed a cow, who would come to



the same spot daily, and pour its own milk on the ground. The mlecchas began wondering, "What might be the cause of this, let us see..." Upon closer examination of the spot, they found a hole at the bottom of which, at the depth of one bow under the ground, there was a lingam-shaped mass of unbearable brightness surrounded with flames. When the mlecchas bent over to take a better look at the wonder they had discovered, they disappeared–just like insects in a fire–into that great lingaṃ, glowing like molten gold spewing flames. Those sinful mlecchas, devoid of yoga and *bhakti*, obtained in this way the great liberation of being released from taking further births. In a similar manner lots of mlecchas who went out of curiosity to see what was there, disappeared.



When Brahma came to know about the mlecchas disappearing into the luminous lingam, he thought about their creation and of their premature and sudden liberation, and became concerned. What would happen if more and more creatures stumbled on this lingam and became precipitously liberated? That did not seem right to the Creator. He wanted his creation to unfold for a long time, with all creatures evolving slowly towards the Absolute, consciously or unconsciously. He quickly summoned Vishnu. Together, Brahma and Vishnu went to that place where the luminous lingam was situated. Reverently bowing down to Shiva, Brahma fashioned a beautiful stone lingam. They joyfully and with devotion established this stone lingam with five faces, along with a base. The lingam was perfect, and made of sapphire. They placed it over the jyotirlingam, like a sheath over their own soul. The wonderful lingam, which was a mass of unbearable brightness, became hidden inside, and was not visible to ordinary creatures. But Shiva, established by Vishnu as a stone lingam with five heads, could always be beheld by the people.

Location of places mentioned in the story

(in order of appearance)

Vagmati
The Bagmati river.

Varanasi
A city on the Ganga in U. P., India. One of the seven sacred cities of Bharata, and the holiest of them. It is also known as Kashi ('the shining one'), and in more recent times, as Benares.

Mount Kailasha
see: Chapter 1

Siddhashrama
This probably refers to the environs of the present-day Gorakhnath temple on Mrigasthali Hill, on the eastern bank of the Bagmati river, near Pashupatinath temple.

Bhrigu-patana
The area of Kailasha Hill on the western bank of the Bagmati, north of Pashupatinath, above Surya Ghat, which is north of Arya Ghat.

Chandarika Tirtha
The location of this tirtha is unknown. Many tirthas in the Pashupati area have vanished due to earthquakes, or human construction.

Munjavan Mountain
The Shivapuri Mountain in the northeast of the Valley.

Siddhadri Hill
Same as Mrigasthali Hill on the eastern bank of the Bagmati, opposite Pashupatinath temple.

Mrigakuta tableland
The area of Mrigasthali Hill, north-west of the present-day Gorakhnath temple.

Kirateshvara
The Kirateshwara temple is located on the north-western crest of Mrigasthali Hill, near Gauri Ghat. The tall, polished-stone lingam stands, tilting slightly, in the middle of a walled enclosure with no roof. It is believed that here Arjuna recieved the Pashupata weapon from Shiva, who was disguised as an aboriginal mountain-hunter (Kirata). This event is described in the *Mahabharata,* Chapter 167 of the Vana Parva.

Mrigasthali forest
The forest on Mrigasthali Hill, on the eastern bank of the Bagmati near Pashupatinath temple.

Chandrabhaga stream
The stream which confluences with the Bagmati slightly above Gokarneshvara temple. It is also called the Chandramati.

Gokarneshvara (4)
The temple of Gokarneshwara is located in the north of the Valley, on the bank of the Bagmati, slightly below its confluence with the Chandrabhaga stream. The lingam itself, is a naturally formed stone lingam, somewhat twisted in appearance. Next to Pashupatinath, it is the most important Shiva shrine in the Valley. The most important celebration occurs here on Gokarna Aunshi day, which is the 15th day of the dark phase of the moon in the lunar month of Bhadra (Aug./Sept.). On this day offerings are made to the

Progenitors. Fatherless men, especially, make offerings to their deceased fathers.

Shringeshvara
This lingam is situated 6 kms. north of the district town of Madhepura, in the Indian state of Bihar. Shringeshwara is a very famous temple, and is visited by thousands of pilgrims throughout the year, but especialy on Shivaratri.

Southern Gokarna
A celebrated Shiva shrine on the seashore, in the state of Karnataka, India.

Mrigendrashikhara
The Shivapuri Mountain in the north of the Valley.

Pashu Kunda
Walking from the Gorakhnath temple down the steps toward Guhyeshwari, about midway, on the right, there is a small whitewashed cave-like shrine with a domed roof. The kunda is in the shrine, but since it has been completely 'restored', its natural contour is no longer visible. Still, during the rainy season some water does gather in the constructed depression on the floor of the shrine.

Guhyeshvari (2)
The shrine of Guhyeshwari is located on the bank of the Bagmati, on the northern slope of Mrigasthali Hill.

Vatsala
The lovely temple of Vatsaleshwari is just outside of the Pashupatinath compound, south of Arya Ghat.

Radha
An ancient kingdom in Bengal, on the western side of the Ganga.

Jayavagishvari (37)
The temple of Jayavagishvari is in the north-western outskirts of Deopatan, on the road from Gaushala to Chabhil. It is on the left-hand side, and has a spectacular painting of a Bhairava on its northern wall.

Rajarajeshvari
The temple of Rajarajeshvari is located in a compound on the western bank of the Bagmati, south of Bhasmeshwara ghat. The

Goddess is housed in a Newari-style temple with a lattice-work front. Her main image (Chamunda) is on the western wall inside the temple.

Tripura
A land in the northeast of Bharata, inhabited by Kiratas. Corresponds to modern day Assam in India.

Vasuki
The temple of Vasuki is located in the northeastern corner of the Pashupatinath compound.

Saurashtra
A land in the west of Bharata, where Sri Krishna had his kingdom, and where its capital, Dvaraka stood. This peninsula in the Arabian Sea, is the westernmost part of India, and is located nowadays in the state of Gujarat.

Manidhatu Mountain
The Manichura Dara, which rises above the town of Sankhu in the northeastern corner of the Valley. The temple of Vajrayogini (Bajra Jogini) is situated above the town, in a pine forest on the hillside.

Manimati
The Manohara River, which has its source on Manicura Dara..

Karunikeshvara (5)
The location of Karunikeshwara lingam is unknown. In Chapter 1.65 of the *Nepala Mahatmya*, it is located at the confluence of the Bagmati and Manohara rivers (Shankhamul). We have not been able to find it there. Karunikeshvara lingam is mentioned in two other places in the *Nepala Mahatmya,* in Chapter 26.4, when Agastya and Chandrama, along with some rishis, are visiting different sacred spots in the valley (see: Chapter 8). Here, we find them coming from Pashupati, pausing at Gokarna to hear the story of Ravana, and then proceeding to Karunikeshvara, after which they go to Vajrayogini at Sankhu, and then to Changu. The other instance is during Bhringi's circumambulation of the sacred region in Chapter 29.15 (See Chapter 9). Here the route goes from Gokarna to Karunikeshvara, and then onward to Sundarijal, then again to Sankhu and Changu-Narayan. This would indicate that Karunikeshvara lingam is located in the northeastern corner of the Valley, in the vicinity of Sankhu, which is where the Buddha is said

to have performed his austerities, and caused the Manimati river to flow. Above the Vajrayogini temple at Sankhu, on the upper slope of Manicura Dara, at Manicurasthan, is located the Manicureshvara lingam, also known as Manilingeshvara. Manicura is the subject of a Mahayana Jataka story, a narrative of one of Shakyamuni Buddha's previous lives as a Bodhisattva on his path to achieving Buddhahood. Here the Bodhisattva, reincarnated as King Manicura, made the ultimate sacrifice of cutting off his jeweline cranial protuberance (ushnisha) to save the land from a plague. This secluded forest shrine can be reached from the Vajrayogini environs by a three hour walk. It is best to ask for directions, after the herb farm the route becomes somewhat overgrown and jungly. Another way of reaching Manicurasthan is by the unpaved road which has been hacked out of the slopes of Shivapuri and Manicura Daras. One can get on this road, from Budhanilakantha, by paying a fee and passing thru the Shivapuri Watershed and Wildlife Preserve, or by connecting to the road via Sundarijal, or Sankhu town. After passing Sankhu from above on the road, look out below for a large pool of water surrounded by meadows on which small dharmasalas have been built. The Manilingeshvara lingam stands nearby, in the open air. It is a naturally formed stone lingam. At least one scholar identifies it with Karunikeshvara. See: Bibiography, Kamal P. Malla. A small relief representing King Manicura cutting off his ushnisha can also be seen there.

Vajrayogini (7)
The temple of Vajrayogini (Bajra Jogini) is situated on the wooded slope of Manicura Dara, outside the town of Sankhu, in the northeast of the Valley.

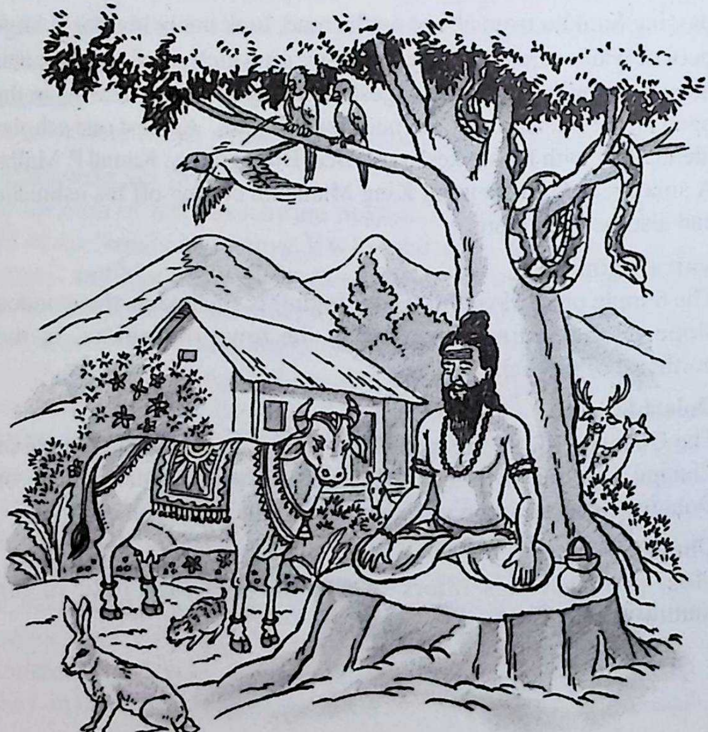
Dolashikhara
The Changu Hill, in the east of the Valley, on which the temple of Changu Narayan is located. It is also known as Dolashikhara, or Dolagiri. The meaning of the name is 'Palanquin Hill'.

Chandravan
Most probably this refers to Champadevi Mountain in the southwest of the Valley.

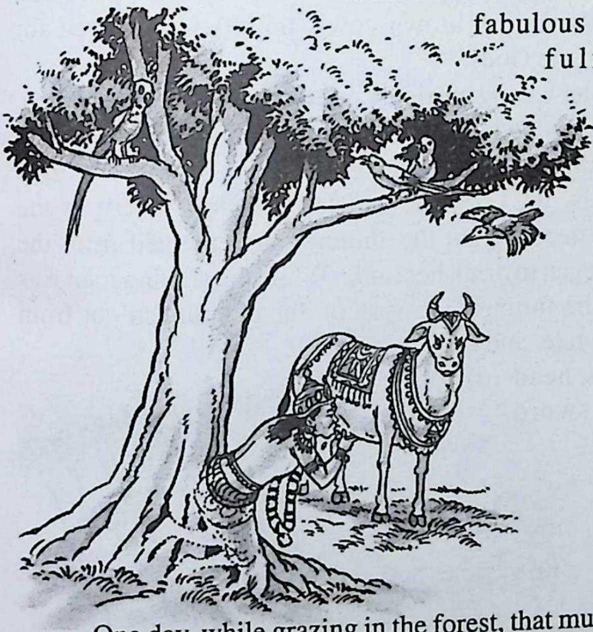
4

How Vishnu Appeared as Changu-Narayan, and How the Great Goddess Settled as Chandeshvari, in This Sacred Valley

There once lived on the excellent Dolagiri Mountain, an ascetic named Sudarshana. Although he was a pious man, and a regular practitioner of religious austerities which called for a lot of self-restraint, nevertheless Sudarshana was still a little inclined towards anger. But he was working on it. Sudarshana set up on the side of Dolagiri a beautiful grove for austerities, and built himself a small hermitage there. The ascetic had few possessions, but he did own one thing which was his greatest treasure, pride, and joy. It was his brown



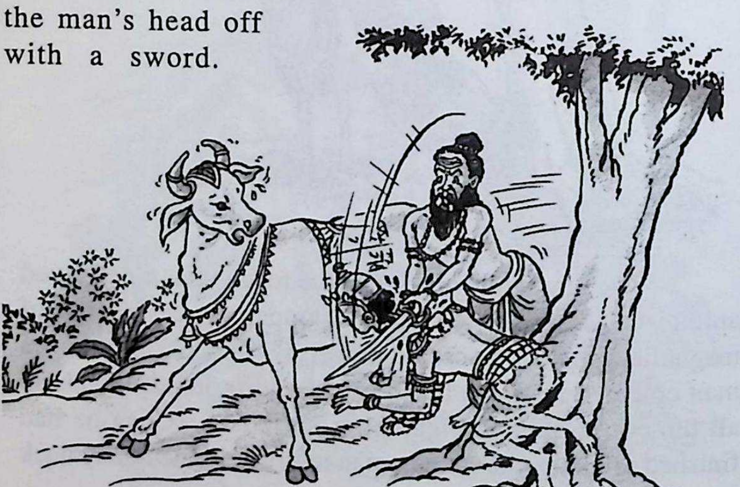
cow. This astonishing cow produced just enough milk for Sudarshana each day, no matter what his requirements that day might be. There was always enough milk in Sudarshana's hermitage for everybody who needed it, be it the munis, who required milk for oblations to the gods and the ancestors, or for Sudarshana's own sustenance, and also for honoring any unexpected guest who might chance by. In this way his cow enabled Sudarshana to perform always the three services enjoined by the sages–towards oneself, towards another self and towards the Supreme Self. All the holy folk on Dolagiri agreed that Sudarshana's brown cow was–to them at any rate–almost like Kamadhenu, the fabulous wish-fulfilling cow of the gods.



One day, while grazing in the forest, that much loved animal wandered by a certain champaka tree (a kind of magnolia with yellow scented flowers). Suddenly, a luminous man emerged from the tree's trunk, and promptly drank up all the cow's milk, straight from her udder. Once he had finished drinking, the shining man returned immediately back into the tree.

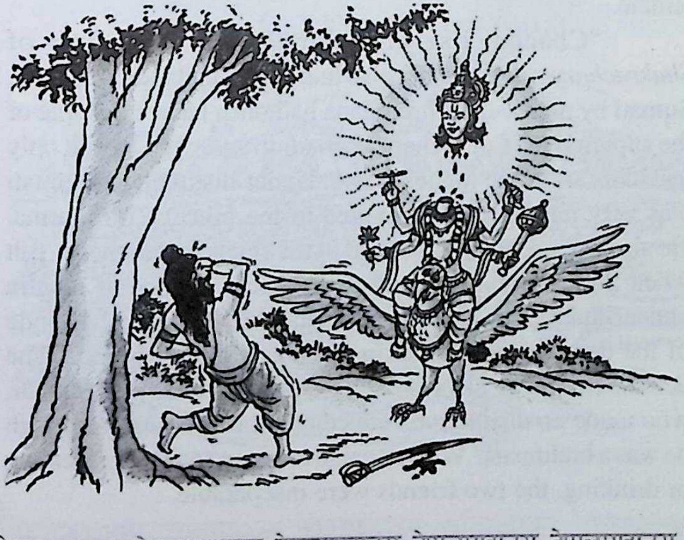
From that day onwards, Sudarshana was not able to get even one drop of milk out of his beloved brown cow, no matter how hard he tried. Every day the cow would go out grazing, and when she got near the champaka tree, the dazzling figure would emerge from it, and drink up all her milk. In this way the muni was unable to get any milk from his cow for seven whole days. Finally, on the morning of the eighth day, the irate ascetic who had slept very badly that night, woke up and did his ablutions abruptly, while muttering angrily under his breath. After the bath, Sudarshana vowed out loud, "If I am indeed a store-house of merit (engendered by religious austerities), then I will chop the head off of that fool who drinks my brown cow's milk, which I need for oblations to the Gods."

After having hurriedly performed his daily recitation, the brahmana slowly started following behind his brown cow as she went out grazing. While Sudarshana remained unnoticed by the cow, she wandered up to the foot of the champaka tree. Again the shining man emerged from the tree, and began to drink her milk. While the shining man was drinking, the furious 'Treasury of Tapas', jumped out from behind the tree, and cut the man's head off with a sword.



Suddenly the headless body underwent a transformation, and Sudarshana saw with amazement that this wonderful shining body had four arms, and was holding a conch, a discus, a mace, and a lotus in its hands! The headless man was sitting on an extraordinary bird, which Sudarshana recognized to be Garuda. At the sight of all of this, the muni's triumphant elation took a downhearted slide. He held his head in his hands, and cried out plaintively, "Now, what have I done!." The dejected ascetic castigated himself more and more, until he finally fainted and fell into a deep swoon. The moment he recovered consciousness, Sudarshana cried out, "I am ready to die immediately, I will atone for this! I will kill myself right now!" But the merciful Narayana, seeing the poor wretch about to die, exclaimed to the muni, "Do not be afraid of me, most excellent of munis, do not despair. Have no doubt that you have done the right thing, and I am pleased with you, O treasury of tapas. Cast your fears aside, most splendid of sages. Come and ask me for a boon, you who keep your vows so well."

When he heard the reassuring words of Narayana, the ascetic immediately cast off all his fears, and joining his



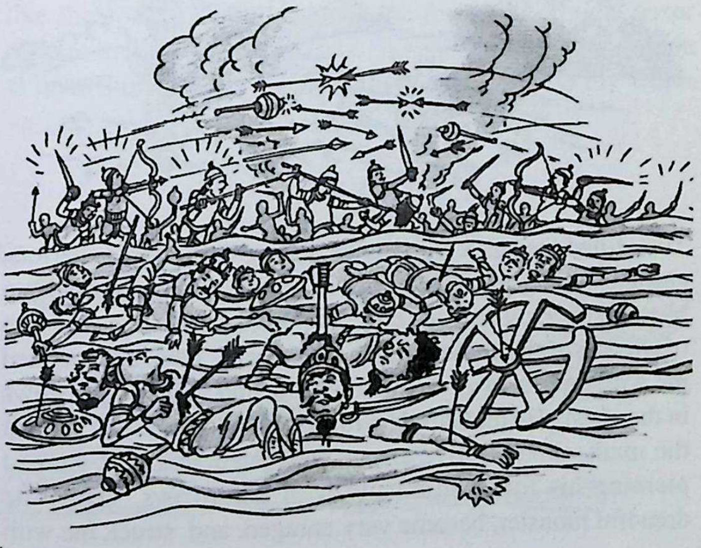
hands in supplication cried out to Vishnu, "To a terrible wrong-doer you give a boon, O Lord, indeed that is a mockery! I am, the vilest, most evil-natured of men! By my own action I have become a butcher, the lowest of all castes! Kill this Sudarshana with your Sudarshana (discus), O Lord. I have cut off the head of the One of whom neither gods nor gandharvas, neither men nor daityas, were able to cut off even one hair in battle!"

Hearing Sudarshana's lament, Narayana smiled and said, "Listen, O lion of sages, and I will tell you how this fate has befallen you and me. Long ago, there was a very bold demon named Chanda. He underwent severe austerities at Varanasi, aimed at propitiating Shiva. Finally Shiva, the Lord of Uma, who is ever united with Her, was well pleased with the demon king, and asked him to select a boon, according to his heart's desire. When he heard the words of the Great God, the demon chief requested, as all demons do, the boon of not being killed by any being. Such boons always come with an exception, for all creatures must eventually die. In Chanda's case, the exception was that of a woman, since the fierce demon could not conceive of being beaten by a female.

"Chanda, like all demons, was a disciple of *Shukracharya*. His teacher also had a brahmana for a disciple, Sumati by name. This brahmana had once been a disciple of the supreme sage of archery, *Parashurama,* who would only teach his art to the highest caste. Under his tutelage, Sumati was very religious, and devoted to the practice of dharma. He also became very proficient in the science of archery. But when Sumati went to study the magical science of mantra under Shukracharya, he became enamored with the life-style of the demons, and found in Chanda a bosom friend. The demon chief was always happy to see his dear pal, Sumati, who made no distinction between the two of them, although he was a brahmana. When it came to going somewhere, eating or drinking, the two friends were inseparable.

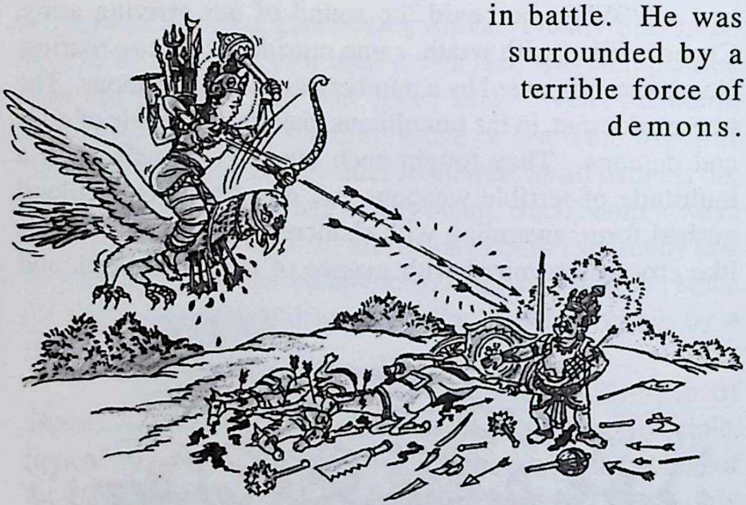
"By the power of Shiva's boon, and with Sumati's help and favor, Chanda spread his brutal rule over all the three worlds," Vishnu continued telling Sudarshana. "Finally, oppressed by the powerful demon, the Gods led by Indra, went to the ocean of milk and propitiated me in my lotus-eyed form of Narayana. Pleased by their prayers, I asked Indra, 'Tell me the reason for your visit. I will swiftly do whatever you request.' 'O Supreme Being,' replied Indra, 'you must fight Chanda for the sake of the Gods.' Of course, being the eternal foe of the daityas, I readily consented. I got up from my serpent-bed and, along with the Gods, went to the city of Chanda, to subdue the mighty demon-chief.

"When he heard the sound of our arriving army, Chanda, filled with wrath, came outside of his city roaring. He was accompanied by a numberless horde of demons. The two armies met, in the tumultuous, hair-raising battle of gods and demons. They fought each other ferociously, with a multitude of terrible weapons. A dreadful river of blood gushed forth, swarming with shattered chariots and wheels like crocodiles, mired with masses of mutilated flesh, and



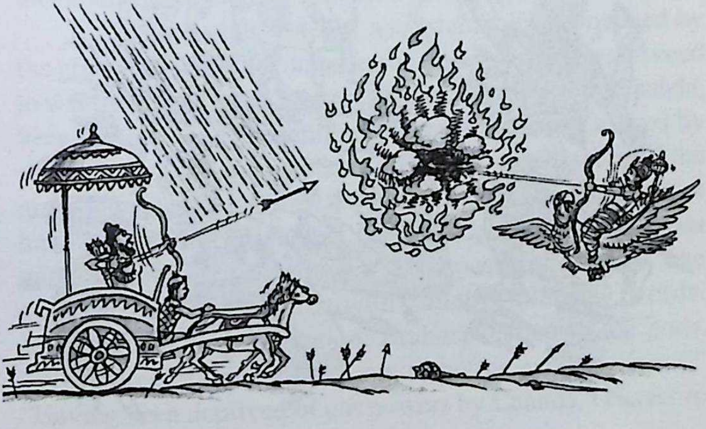
filled with heaps of severed heads, with their hair floating in it like aquatic moss. It swelled with frightening wave-like torrents of arrows destroying gods and demons alike. Such was that fearful river of death. Only the brave reached its other shore, while the cowardly sank in it.

"The army of the Gods was scattered by the demons with their formidable powers," continued Vishnu. "Then, I went into combat with the mighty demons. With a myriad of arrows streaming forth from my Sharnga bow, the great troop of the demons was crushed. When the demon king saw the rout of his army, he himself came out to attack me in battle. He was surrounded by a terrible force of demons. They filled the earth with the deafening din of their chariots, and displaying great dexterity of hand, covered me with a blizzard of arrows. Then a ferocoius battle, like the collision of two storm clouds, took place between us. Chanda wounded me with three arrows on the forehead, and with seven arrows in the chest. He hit Garuda with sixty-three arrows. I also hit the mark, shooting five arrows into the demon's chest, and piercing his forehead deeply with ten arrows. Then the dreadful monster, became very enraged, and struck me with

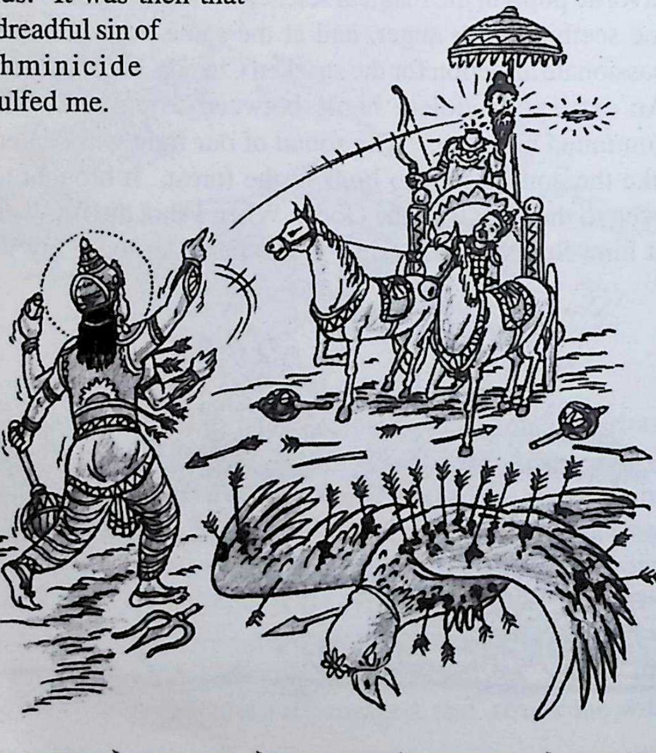


three more arrows, and Garuda with eight arrows, causing his body to bleed profusely. When I saw the maiming of Garuda, a great wrath arose in me. I swiftly cut down Chanda's banner with one sharp-bladed arrow. Then, in an instant, I cut off his charioteer's head with another single arrow, and shot down the villain's four horses with four arrows. I split his armor open with one arrow, and angrily drove five arrows directly in his chest. With a perforated armor, deprived of chariot, horse and charioteer, the demon paced upon the ground swiftly, becoming very confused.

"When he saw his beleaguered friend terribly tormented by my arrows, the sagacious Sumati quickly came forward in a large chariot, placing the demon behind him in order to save his life. That eminent brahmana, master-archer, disciple of Parashurama's, who also was Shukracharya's favorite pupil in the magical science of mantras, came towards me seething with anger, and at the same time filled with a passionate affection for the stricken Chanda, his bosom friend. An extremely violent battle between us ensued," Vishnu continued his story. "The sound of our fight was deafening, like the contest of two lions in the forest. It brought terror even to the realms of the Gods. When I shot the fire-weapon at him, Sumati made rain. And when I let loose my wind-



weapon, Sumati countered it with the mountain-weapon. Even the snake-weapon that I shot at him was stopped by Sumati with the Garuda weapon. While opposing my every action with a counteraction, that shrewd and valiant warrior struck my chest with seven terrible arrows. And then, when he hit Garuda with ninety arrows, the peerless brahmana roared out in triumph. Wounded in his vital parts so terribly, Garuda vomiting blood toppled motionless on the ground, like a felled tree. Once Garuda went down, I had to fight on foot. A great, loud, and frightful cry of, 'Ha, ha!' came from the side of the Gods. A feeling of shame and anger arose in me, forgiving as I am. Realizing the gravity of the situation, and swayed by the inexorable purpose of future events, I hurled at Sumati the Sudarshana chakra, streaming with terrible flames. The brahmana's head was cut off by the fiery discus. It was then that the dreadful sin of brahminicide engulfed me.



"Shukracharya, shaking with rage, strode onto the battlefield, and cursed me. 'O Achyuta!' he said, 'Because you have cut off my disciple's head, later on, a brahmana born in his own clan will behead you, Hari.' This way I received a dreadful curse from Shukracharya. Plagued by the humiliation of killing a brahmana," concluded Vishnu, "I wandered through many lands, but nowhere in my wanderings did I find any solace. O best of brahmanas," he said to the dumbfounded Sudarshana, "because of the influence of my terrible sin, I came to stay on Dolagiri, in a champaka tree. On account of Shukracharya's curse, and through no fault of your own, you came to cut off my head. Now that the curse is rescinded, I will dwell here, at Dolagiri. Henceforth you, Sudarshana, must only live here and perform the daily *puja* to me. Those who fervently seek my darshan in this place, on the twelfth day of the lunar fortnight, or on full moon day, and similarly on a Wednesday, they indeed are Vaikuntha bound."

In this way, on the delightful Dolagiri, Hari came out of a champaka tree and had his head cut off. From that time on, the headless Vishnu became established there, and Sudarshana became his first *pujari*. On account of Vishnu having settled there, by Garuda's grace upon the devotees, all the snakes on Dolagiri lost their venom and became benign.

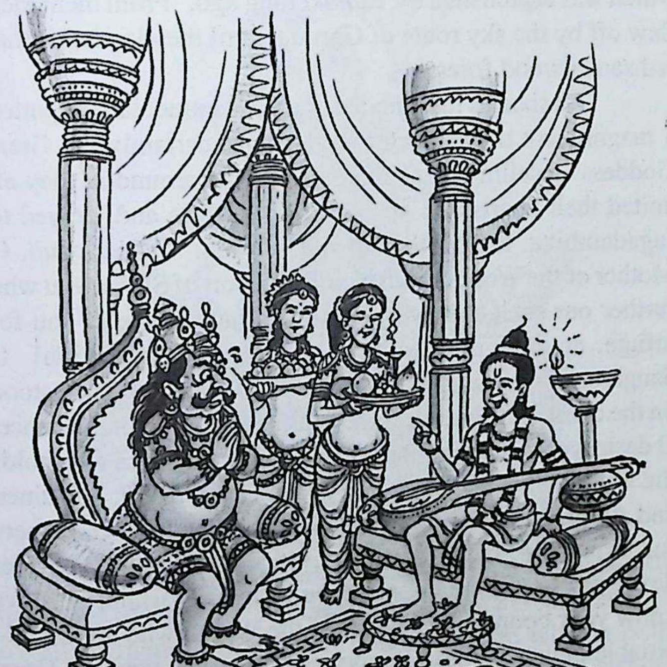
Having slain Sumati, and become overwhelmed by the ghastly sin of brahminicide, the fallen *Achyuta* was forced to wander from land to land seeking atonement, while Chanda, very much angered, tyrannized the three worlds. Grieved by the killing of Sumati, the king of the demons terrorized the gods daily, and very soon they all fled away into hiding. Not having found any protection from the demon, all those gods with Indra at their head, went to Brahma for shelter. The gods praised the Creator with suitably pleasing words. Impressed by their adoration, Brahma replied to the gods, "What is the reason for your coming before me? Speak out!" "Having been deprived of our powers by Chanda, O Lord, to your shelter, we have come," the gods cried. "Preserve and protect us with compassion, O Brahma! You, indeed, are our ultimate refuge." Brahma then graciously replied, "I know what suffering has entered your hearts, O venerable Gods. East from Shleshmantaka Forest, there is a red sandalwood grove. You must go to that grove for help from the Great Goddess, who is living there in a tree."

While all the gods, after having bowed down deeply to Brahma's lotus feet, were on their way to the red sandalwood grove, Narada muni, in the meantime, quietly slipped away, and journeyed to the city of Chanda. Having heard that Narada had come, the demon king got off his throne, and using the best vessels and materials for worship he owned, treated with reverence the honored guest. He bade him to take a seat, and having bowed down politely, the demon king inquired of the muni, "From where did you come, O brahmana? What remarkable events have you witnessed on the way? Sanctified is our house by your presence, O virtuous muni. Now, from the very sight of you, we have become fulfilled and contented. What is the cause of your coming? Just tell me, and I will do everything."

When Narada heard Chanda's words, he said to his host, "A valiant warrior are you, O great demon, Shiva's devotee are you! You have achieved dominion over the three worlds, and all the Gods you have subjugated. In battle with you, even Narayana was put to flight. You are a knowledgeable person who can understand the situation. O Chanda, all those mischievous Gods have consulted on the highest level with Brahma, in order to slay you. O best of the demons, I know you to be a brave devotee of Shiva, and so compassion arose in my heart, and for that reason I came here to tell you of the plot against you."

When he heard Narada's warning, intense terror struck the demon. But demonstrating great self-possession, Chanda calmly said, "I am fortunate. I have done what should be done, and my life has been successful. Seeing that, O muni, compassion arose in you. O Lord, tell me immediately about all the activities of the Gods directed against me. Having listened, I shall do my best to counteract all that."

Having heard Chanda's assertion, Narada said to him, "O demon, listen! I will tell you exactly what the Gods are plotting against you. Being sorely aggrieved by you, they went to Brahma for refuge. Pleased, Brahma replied to them, 'Listen to my words. The stratagem for Chanda's slaying is to be a carefully kept secret. East of Shleshmantaka Forest, in a red sandalwood grove, there is a divine and elevated place, where a large champaka tree grows. In the middle of that tree, situated in the middle of that grove, dwells the World Mother. All you have to do is go to Her for protection, and She will do the job.'"

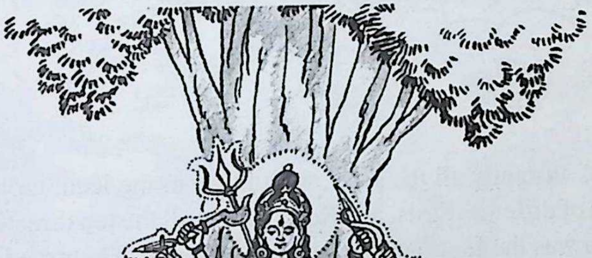


"Having said this to the Gods," Narada finished, "Brahma vanished, and all the Gods set out for that forest. In the meantime, I have come to you, O valiant leader of the demons. Do what you can while you can," Narada said, and departed to rejoin the gods. In the meantime, the demon, being troubled by what Narada had just told him, consulted with his ministers.

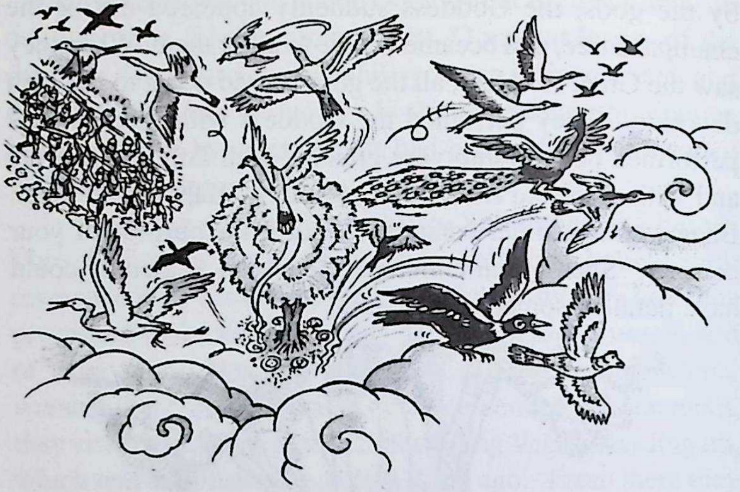
All the gods went quickly to Shleshmantaka Forest. They bathed in the river Vagmati and then beheld with reverence both Lord Pashupati and Guhyeshvari. Then they proceeded to the north, and had darshan of Gokarnesha, and of Vajrayogini. Next, the gods climbed Dolagiri and offered worship there to Narayana. As they descended the mountain, they visited the shrine of the all-pervading Vagishvara lingam, which was established by *Valmiki* long ago. From there they flew off by the sky route of Garuda, until they landed at that red sandalwood forest.

As soon as they landed, the gods immediately spotted a magnificent tree, which they felt was certainly the Great Goddess' dwelling place there. Standing around it, they all united their hearts and voices with devotion and, prayed to Jagadambika, the Mother of the World: "O *Narayani*, O Mother of the World, O auspicious consort of Shiva, you who further our each and every aim! We have come to you for refuge, do save us who have sought your protection! O daughter of the Himalaya Mountain, O One who once stood on the chest of Shiva, we have sunk in the ocean of existence, O destroyer of demons, save us! O Great Goddess who holds the whole universe in Her lap, you are the Creator, Sustainer, and Annihilator of the world ! Save us who have come here for your help, O Mother who always has mercy on Her devotees. O *Chandika*, not even Brahma, Vishnu, or Shiva know your bounds. O Mother of the World, who are we all–pitiable beings of little importance–to praise you? O Great Goddess, please be the salvation of all those oppressed by the demon Chanda! O *Kalyani*, kill Chanda the danava!"

As she was being lauded and entreated in this way by the gods, the Goddess suddenly appeared out of the champaka tree, and became visible to all of them. When they saw the Great Goddess, all the gods bowed down to her with devotion. They perfumed the Goddess with incense, and performed her worship very grandly, with different flowers and with manifold ritual food offerings. Happy with them, Bhagavati asked her votaries, "What is the purpose of your coming? Speak, dear children! How such a calamity could have befallen someone like you?"



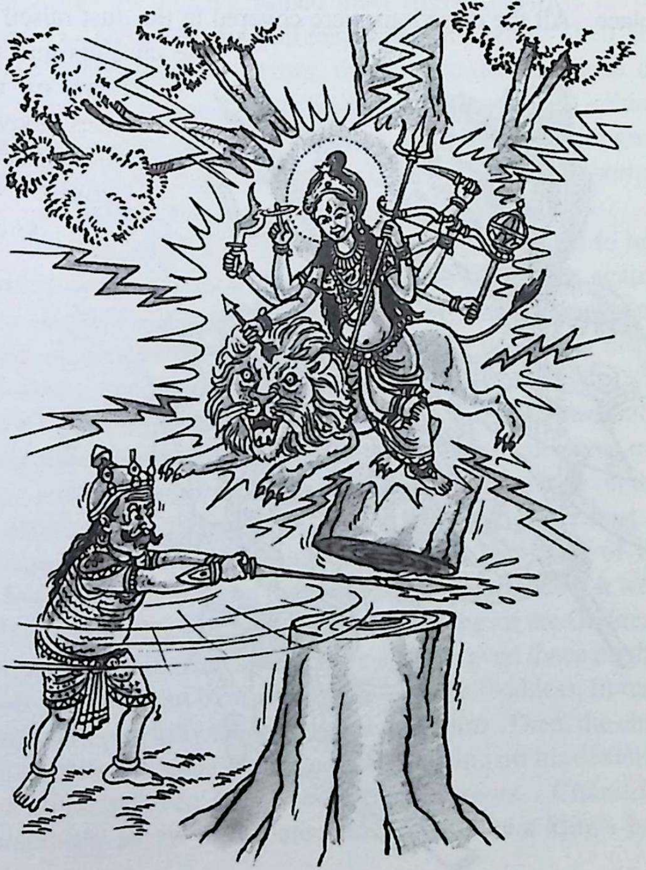
While the Daughter of the Mountain was asking these questions of the gods, a great and terrifying uproar was heard by all of them. As they all rose up to see what was the source of this great and dreadful din, they saw in the distance the incomparable and frightful army of the ruler of the danavas approaching. The sight of it sowed great terror among the



gods. Instantly all the gods, with Indra in the lead, took the form of different birds, and fled away in all the ten directions. Indra was the first one to make his getaway. He turned into a very beautiful peacock, and flew away leaving all the gods behind. Yama, who became extremely terrified at the sight of Chanda's army, fled away as fast as he could, taking the form of a crow. After Yama's retreat, all the other gods followed suit. The Moon turned into a *chakora-bird*, the Sun into a *jivanjivaka* bird, Varuna took the form of a swan, while Vayu turned into a heron. Kubera took on the shape of a white crane, and fled away, too. In this way, all the gods scattered in the ten directions. The Great Goddess quickly went back inside the champaka tree.

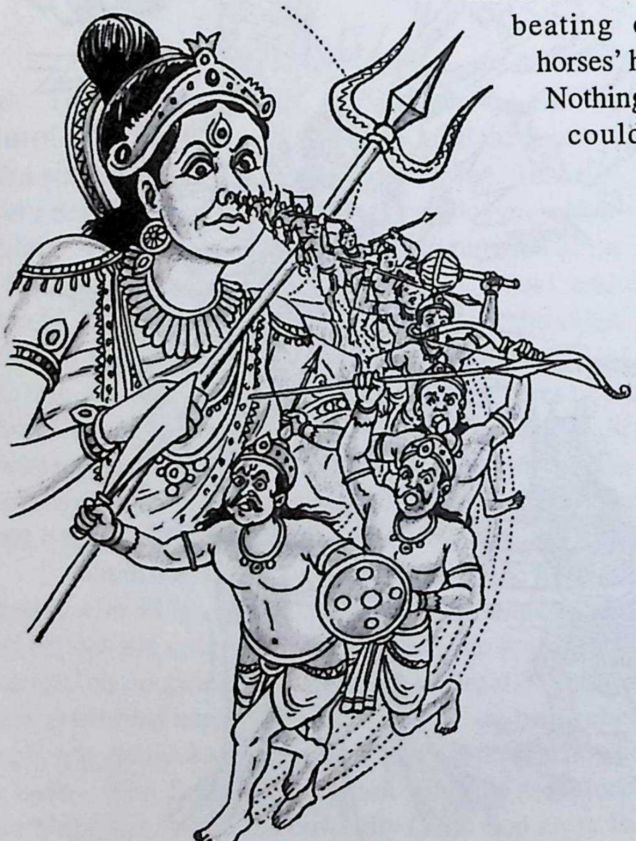
When the host of gods fled away in the form of birds, Chanda with all his armies, reached the champaka tree. The demon saw the articles of worship that the gods left behind scattered on the ground, and thought to himself, "These things were assembled here by the Gods in order to bring about my death, but the Goddess they were worshipping is nowhere to be seen. The Lady on the Lion must have entered the champaka tree, while the cowardly Gods fled away leaving these articles of worship behind. I should fight with Chandika now. While none of her warriors is around, I will quickly retaliate. I should not loose this chance!" As soon as he thought this, the demon famous for his strength, slashed the champaka tree with a sword, and out came the Great Goddess. Mounted on a lion, the 8-armed Goddess with weapons in every hand, stood there shining like millions of suns. When she saw Chanda, the Great Goddess chortled "Ha!"

When the demon-king saw the Daughter of the Mountain, he immediately ordered his greatest warriors, "O best of demons, go and capture this great beauty for me. She



is very lovely, and her body is very delicate, so do not strike her. Just go and grab that jewel by surprise." Thinking of her merely as a frivolous female, at Chanda's command, the mighty, malevolent demons rushed forward to capture the Goddess. When she saw the demons approaching her in that manner, the Mother-goddess roared a fiery "Hum!" turning them all into ashes. Then she gave out a snort of anger. From her breath were born troops of powerful and valiant warriors with various weapons in their hands. They immediately attacked the demons.

Then a very tumultuous and hair-raising battle took place. All the directions were covered in the dust raised by the chariots and the beating of the horses' hooves. Nothing at all could be seen.



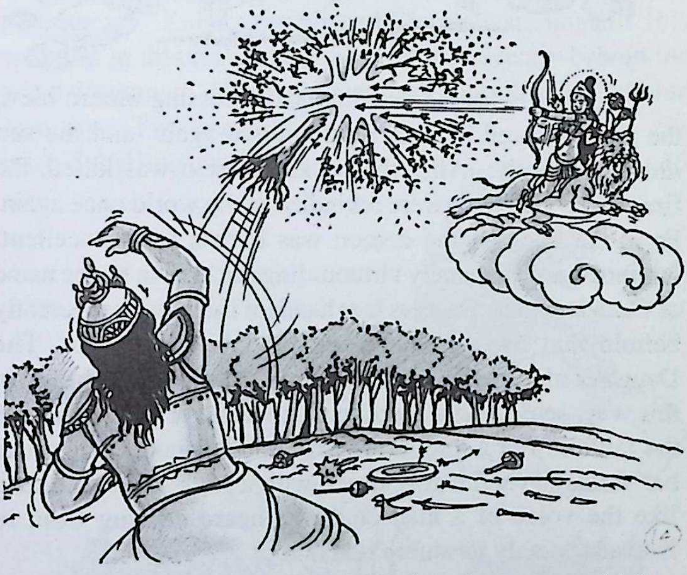
The armies became disoriented from the dust clouds raised by the elephants. Soon, a very dreadful river was born out of the blood of the wounded. It gave a thrill to the brave, and a shiver to the cowardly. That ferocious river was like a demon-killer standing at Yama's gruesome gate. The terrible army of demons was shattered by the *Devi's* troops. Then, the dust particles settled peacefully, and the sun was seen once again.

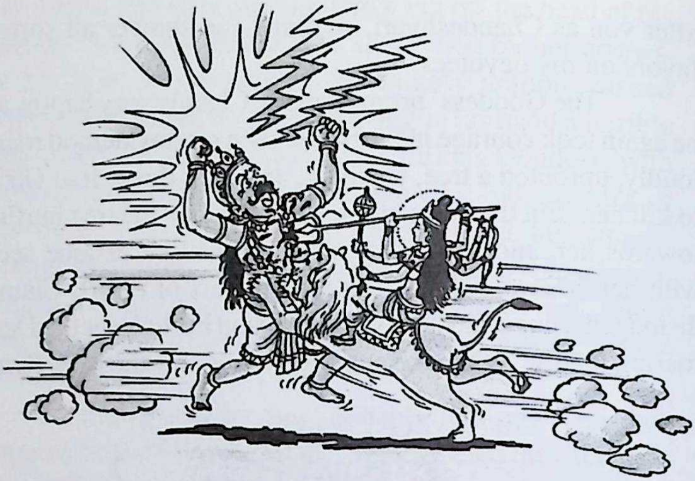
When the dreadful Chanda saw his army of demons vanquished, he rushed forward with such vehemence in his chariot,that it seemed as if he were splitting the earth asunder. In the combat that followed, Chanda, famous for his prowess, and expert in archery, rained most frightful arrows on the Goddess' troops, cutting off their heads and arms. Then, in a fury, with snake-like arrows, the terrible demon sliced off their thighs. When she saw her army scattered, the Goddess became extremely infuriated. She rushed forward with great speed to kill the mighty Chanda. Chanda, also sped forward in his chariot towards the Mountain-born Goddess.

The Devi saw the demon arriving, and said to him with a smile, "O great demon, you have stood firm against my troops. Fight resolutely with me today, for I will certainly destroy your battle-confidence." Hearing the words of the Goddess, the demon roared back at her, "Wait, wait, O Devi. Don't feel so proud in the battle. Since you favor the Gods, you have always killed demons. But, today you have met me, and it is I who will eliminate your self-assurance on this battlefield." Saying this to the Goddess, the foremost of demons rained arrows on her. But the Daughter of the Mountain just cut down his arrows and weapons as if it were child's play. The demon king shot out of the air the Goddess' arrows, as well. And so Chanda cut down even those mighty weapons shot out by the Goddess, and the Goddess, in turn, cut down playfully the weapons shot by him. Then, the chief of the demons, greatly enraged, and showing off his dexterity of hand, grieved Girija with more arrows. Chandika, extremely angry, in response broke the demon king's bow with an arrow, and with another arrow cut off the head of his charioteer. Soon his banner was also felled by her arrows. When his bow was smashed, the mighty demon, rushed rapidly forward to kill the Devi, waving in his hand a terrible looking mace. When she saw it, the furious Goddess, with her arrows, pulverized that mace into tiny bits the size of sesame seeds. When his weapon was shattered, the enraged demon grabbed out of his chariot a sword and shield. Chandika cut the sword and shield into pieces with sharp arrows, too. Finally, the torrent of her arrows began to plague the fierce demon.

Realizing that he was probably less powerful than this opponent, the demon suddenly remembered the exception to Shiva's boon, to be killed only by a woman. Recognizing the power of Parvati in this formidable female, he said to her with incomparable devotion, "You are not an ordinary woman, O Mountain-born Goddess. I know who you are, Great Goddess. The Primal *Shakti* verily are you. You have created the three worlds. And because of your partiality towards the Gods, the demons were always smitten by you in the end. I know this, O Devi, that I am undoubtedly to be killed by you. O Great Goddess, until I have bathed and established a lingam, till then, O Chandika, at my request, wait here on the battle-field. And after having killed me, Goddess, may you kindly remain in this red sandalwood grove, conferring blessings on the world under the name of Chandeshvari." The Daughter of the Mountain listened to the demon-king's request with a smile on her face, and then replied, "O king of demons, you have attained the greatest knowledge, which is very rare. Need I remind you that no creature can exist forever? Know, that whatever can be seen or heard in this world, is perishable. You don't have to worry about establishing a shivalingam, Chanda. When you are killed by me, a most handsome, delightful, and divine lingam called Chandeshvara will rise here from your own body. And for your sake, after I have quickly dispensed with you, I shall also remain here, named after you as Chandeshvari, so that I can shower all sorts of favors on my devotees."

The Goddess' promise made Chanda very happy, and he again took courage in the battle. The mighty demon roared loudly, uprooted a tree, waved it, and then threw it at Girija, to kill her. But the moment the Goddess saw the tree hurtling towards her, and cut it into small pieces like sesame seeds with her arrows. Then, with the greatest of effort, Chanda dislodged a huge and heavy boulder, and hurled it at the Devi, roaring loudly. When the angry Goddess saw the rock flying towards her, she smashed it quickly into fragments with her arrows. The furious demon, who was wearying, seeing the rock fail, and finding nothing at hand to attack with, rushed forward raising his fist to hit the Goddess. But when she saw this demon who so was hard to conquer, even by the gods, rushing towards her, the Goddss felled Chanda, piercing his heart with a spear. The mighty demon hit the ground like a mountain struck by lightening, shaking the whole earth with all the rivers, forests, and mountains on it.

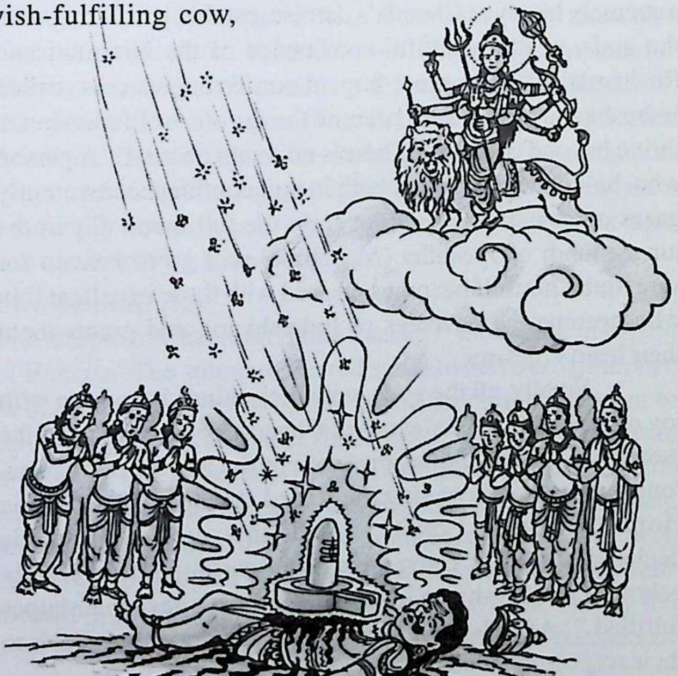




Then, a sacred smelling and caressing breeze blew, the rivers flowed in their right courses again, and the sun shone brilliantly. After the wicked demon was killed, the fires of the sacrifices were rekindled in the world once again. From the body of the demon was born a most excellent, luminous, and extremely virtuous lingam, known by the name of Chandeshvara. Success is at hand for those, who reverently behold that lingam in the red-sandalwood grove. The Daughter of the Mountain, after having killed Chandasura in this way, settled right there in that forest for the welfare of the faithful. For a long time, a red sandalwood tree grew at her shrine. When it was struck with a stick, cries sounding like the voice of a man could be heard coming from it. Nowadays, only its stump remains.

Chandasura was killed by the Goddess on the full-moon of Vaishakh (April/May). Therefore, from that time on, a fervent festival for the satisfaction of the Goddess is held every year on this occassion (in Banepa). At that time, for the pleasure of the Goddess, a religious procession should be performed by the people. Those who witness the great procession of Chandeshvari, and those who at that time perform with devotion acts of charity, obtain heaven, without a doubt. By merely listening to this noble story, a flood of great sin is destroyed. By it, brahmanas will master Vedanta, kshatriyas will be victorious, vaishyas will be rich in money and grains, and shudras will obtain a better fate.

When the gods saw their hitherto invincible foe killed by the Goddess, they gave up their bird bodies and came to Chandeshvari. All the gods worshipped Ambika with devotion. And that Great Goddess, who was worshipped most elaborately by all the gods, with incense, and other articles, made her home right there in the red sandalwood forest. The gods, discerning that this region was a rare and inaccessible holy place, established in the vicinity lingams marked with their names. Kubera established Dhaneshvara lingam. It is said that in this Kali yuga, those who reverently behold the great lingam of Dhaneshvara will undoubtedly become wealthy. The celestial wish-fulfilling cow,



Kamadhenu established an unsurpassed lingam which grants all wishes, called Gokhureshvara. Those peerless people, who become devotees of Gokhureshvara, will acquire an incomparable increase in their herds of cows. The great sage *Vishvamitra* crossed the mountains, and at the auspicious confluence of the Roshamati and Kaushiki rivers established a lingam called after his own name as Vishvamitreshvara,, which grants both the fruits of worldly enjoyment and liberation. The Kaushiki is one of the foremost among rivers, and the sister of Vishvamitra. It destroys great sins, and removes the evil thoughts from human minds. The great and auspicious Vishvamitreshvara lingam stands on its bank. Those who visit Vishvamitreshvara on Shivaratri will swiftly attain the four goals of human life. This place is not counted among the sacred sites of Shleshmantaka Forest. Indra, extremely happy at Chanda's demise, established, along with the gods, at the beautiful confluence of the Niramati and Roshamati rivers, a great lingam conferring success, called Indreshvara. Those who become the devotees of Indreshvara thrive beyond compare. There's no doubt about it. A person who, having taken a ritual bath in that confluence, reverently gazes upon Indreshvara lingam on the full moon day in the lunar month of Jyeshtha (May/June) will go to heaven for sure. Indra himself becomes pleased with those excellent folk who become the devotees of Indreshvara, and grants them their hearts' desires.

Finally, all the gods, with their minds brimming with joy on account of the slaying of Chanda, descended from the mountain, and at the auspicious confluence of two rivers, founded an excellent lingam, called Ashapureshvara (The Hope-fulfilling Lord). And the contented gods declared happily, "Those people on earth, who reverently behold Ashapureshvara lingam, will always have their hopes fulfilled." After having said this, all the gods went back to their respective abodes.

Location of places mentioned in the story

(in order of appearance)

Dolagiri (See Chapter 3)

Vagishvara (10)

The Vagishvara lingam is located near the village of Bageshwari on the lower slope of Mahadeopokhari Dara in the east of the Valley. In order to reach Vagishvara, one takes the road to Nagarkot until Kharipati. After that, at the first hairpin turn in the road, one walks down and crosses the Mahadeo Khola. There is a small water-works there. After crossing the khola, take the wide path going up the side of the hill, and continue on along the slope for about forty-five minutes, or until the end of the road. After that, it's about a five minute walk to Vagishvara. It's best to ask directions from local people along the way. Sometimes they also call it 'Valmikishwara', or 'Valmishwara'. The small compound of Vagishvara shrine is located in a depression amidst the fields. It is a very peaceful spot. There is also a small confluence below it. The shrine can be can be recognized by a statue of Hanuman on a pillar facing the lingam. Vagishvara lingam is a naturally formed stone lingam approximately one foot high. It is shelterd by a large boulder.

Chandeshvari (12)

The temple of Chandeshvari is located a short walk northeast of Banepa. The stump of the red sandalwood tree mentioned in the story is on the right side of the sanctum. Adjacent to the main temple is a smaller shrine housing the Chandeshvara lingam. If one walks 5-10 minutes further north, outside the temple compound, one can find along the banks of the stream, several indentations in the rocks which are said to have been made by the Goddess when she slew Chanda. A small, self-formed lingam can be seen on the opposite bank. Along the way, there is also a small pool of water which is considered as a Shakti pitha. Sati's urinary tract is said to have fallen there.

Dhaneshvara (14)
The lingam can be found in a temple on the edge of Dhaneshwar villlage, which is located on the northeastern slope of Dhaneshwar Dara about half a mile south of Banepa on way to Panauti. The lingam is a naturally-formed stone one with four silver faces attached to it.

Gokhureshvara (15)
Also known as Gokhurakeshvara, this lingam is found in Dhulikhel, on the way to Namo Buddha. On the outskirts of the village, on the left-hand side and slightly below the road, one passes a compound with a small temple covered with ceramic tiles in it. Inside the temple resides the Gokhureshvara lingam.

Vishvamitreshvara
We have not visited this site. Neither have we found any reference to its whereabouts in books.

Indreshvara (17)
The great temple of Indreshwara is located in Panauti, some two hundred meters away from the confluence of the Roshi and Punyamati Kholas. It is believed to be the oldest standing temple in central Nepal. It ihas been recently restored. The lingam itself is covered by a gilded repoussé sheath.

Niramati (16)
The Punyamati (or Punyabati) Khola which arises on the southern slopes of Mahadeu Pokhari Dara, and flows through Panauti, where it joins the Roshi Khola.

Roshamati (16)
The Roshi Khola, which arises on Phulchoki Hill, flows through Panauti, and eventually joins the Sunkoshi River. There is a legend about how the river got it's name. When it first arose, both the kings of Patan and Panauti were anxious to have the river flow through their respective kingdoms. They both appealed to the goddess Pulchoki Mai, who replied that whoever first offered her a garland of golden and silver flowers would get the river to flow their way. The king of

Patan returned to his palace, and ordered the royal jeweler to make a costly garland, as soon as possible. The king of Panauti returned to his palace, and quickly went out into the kitchen garden where he prepared a garland of mustard flowers (golden) and radish flowers (silvery), which he then offered to Pulchoki Mai. By the time the king of Patan returned with his garland, the river was already flowing to Panauti. This angered the king greatly. From then on, the river was called Roshamati, which means the 'anger(ing)' river. The confluence of the Rohsi and the Punyamati is considered to be a mystical triple confluence (triveni sangam), like the confluence of the three most sacred rivers of Hinduism the Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati. At Panauti, the mystical river Lilavati, invisible to ordinary eyes just like the Saraswati, issues from a hilltop shrine to the great Yogi, Gorakhnath, and joins the confluence in the vicinity of the Brahmayani temple on the opposite side of the Roshi. This holy confluence is also called Indra-Indrani (Indra's consort), or Saci-Indrani Tirtha.

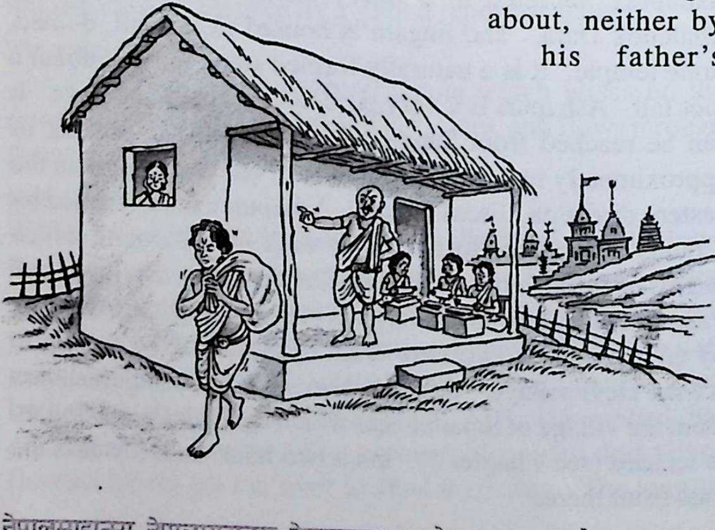
Ashapureshvara (18)

This wish-fulfilling lingam is found in the tiny village of Ashapuri, secreted in a valley on the eastern slopes of Khalchok Dara. The lingam is housed in a small, domed, stone temple. It is a naturally formed stone lingam, about a foot tall. Ashapuri is a very peaceful and pleasant place. It can be reached from Sanga (via Bainsipatti) by a walk of approximately two hours, which takes one over a pass in the eastern direction. From Panauti, Ashapuri can be reached by a rather steep three to four hour walk on a footpath which begins near the Panauti bus stand. Alternately, driving out of Panauti towards Bhaleshwar, it is possible to get to Ashapuri by an enchanting two hour walk to the north, beginning at Kusha Devi village. One can also walk to Ashapureshvara from the village of Sipadol near which the Doleshvara lingam is located (see Chapter 5). It's a two hour walk towards the east from there.

5

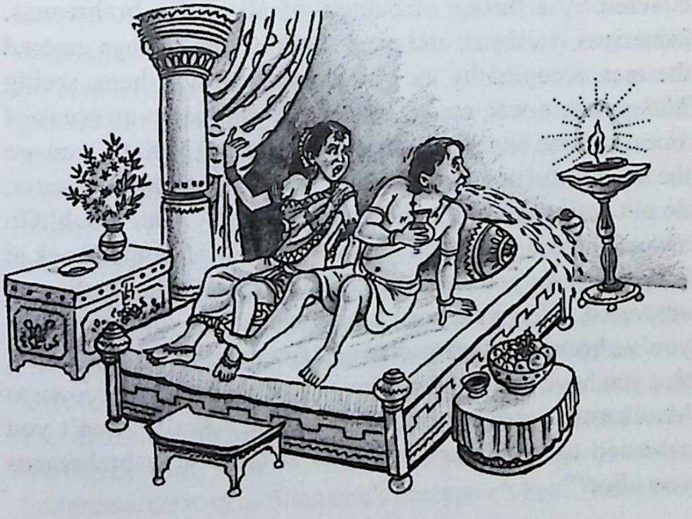
How the First Human Pilgrim Came to This Sacred Valley

There is a city on the banks of the Ganges called Varanasi, which is nurtured by Shiva. A person who is fortunate enough to die there is released from further rebirths. In that holy city there lived a distinguished brahmana named Priyatithi. His wife, whose name was Gunavati, was a virtuous woman, full of generous impulses, and very devoted to her husband. She was a fortunate person, marked with all the auspicious signs. They had four sons: Medhatithi, Gunanidhi, Bharata, and Malaya. The first three sons inherited the good characters of their mother and father. The boys were always obedient to their parents and spent most of their time engaged in reciting the Vedas and pondering over their profound meaning. The youngest son, Malaya, having inherited none of those good qualities, went bad. He became a swindler, a thief, and a backbiting slanderer. He was extremely fond of gambling. When no improvement in his behavior could be brought about, neither by his father's



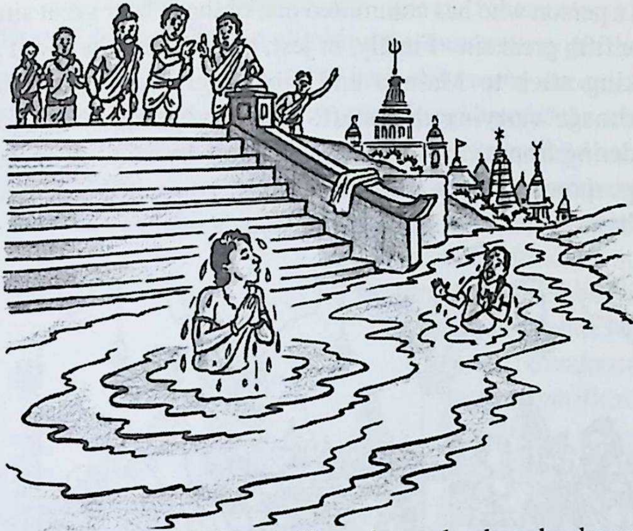
strenuous forbiddings, nor by his mother's piteous pleas, nor by his relatives' stern admonitions, the whole family simply gave up on him. After that, Malaya became thoroughly depraved and, finally, a notorious lecher. He would get whatever money he could, by theft or by deceit, and spent it all on whores. Because of his life-style, Malaya became an outcast among his own people. They regarded and treated him like a low-caste butcher.

One night, while Malaya was having his fun with a floozie, he felt a bit sapped, and in order to refresh himself, reached over to drink some water from a pot that was kept by his paramour's bed. The rake's palate was baffled by a taste that it had never tasted before. Malaya turned immediately to the tart, and asked, "O darling, what is this strange drink I just drank? I thought it was water." Looking at the pot, the prostitute replied, "You have unfortunately drunk some liquor, which I kept here in my pot, you bum!" Now, alcohol is inauspicious for brahmanas, and they are forbidden to drink it. Other castes can. Brahmanas, on the other hand, may take *bhang* for intoxication or inspiration, and in Varanasi many are in the habit of doing so. Malaya, in spite of all his

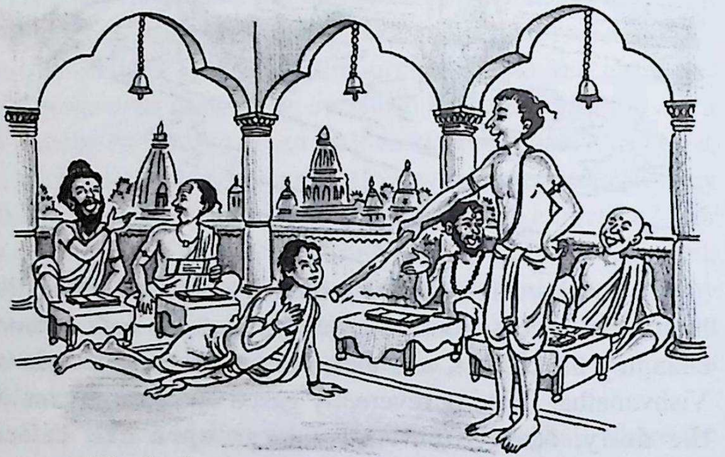


misdeeds, somehow had avoided liquor. Perhaps, at the bottom of his wicked heart, he was proud for at least not having done that. But now he had. Hearing the whore's words, Malaya became very upset. He suddenly felt a great loathing in his heart, and thought to himself, "Although I was born in a brahmana family in Kashi ("the shining one", Varanasi), near Lord *Vishveshvara*, I have neither studied the Vedas nor practiced great austerities. I have not even worshipped Lord Vishveshvara, or performed a sacred bath at Manikarnika ghat (the main burning ghat in Varanasi), nor given one coin to a beggar, ever! All I have done is cultivated a passion for gambling, and a love of prostitutes! And now, finally, I have drunk liquor! How will I ever atone for my sins? How will I accomplish the appropriate expiation? For a complete self-purification, I must go to Manikarnika ghat, that annihilator of great sins, and take a ritual bath with my clothes on!" Lost in these thoughts, and having abandoned all shame, Malaya departed quickly for a ritual bath at glorious Manikarnika ghat.

When Malaya reached that virtuous ghat, where the purest of brahmanas take their holy dip, he saw its steps covered by a throng of bathers of all castes–brahmanas, kshatriyas, vaishyas, and even shudras. As Malaya entered the area occupied by the brahmanas, one of them, seeing Malaya come near, notorious all over Varanasi as an ocean of vices, became angry and shouted at him, "O Malaya, you are the most sinful man in Varanasi! You corrupt, vile fornicator, do not defile any of the brahmanas here by your touch! Go away, you lecher!" "You go away!" Malaya shouted back at him, "Why do you vent your anger on me?" The brahmana answered, "You were born a brahmana. Yet your whole life you've been addicted to dice and frequenting whores. Now that you have finally drunk liquor, you've decided to come to Manikarnika ghat for purification, you rascal! Aren't you ashamed to stand here and look at these holy brahmanas you idiot?"



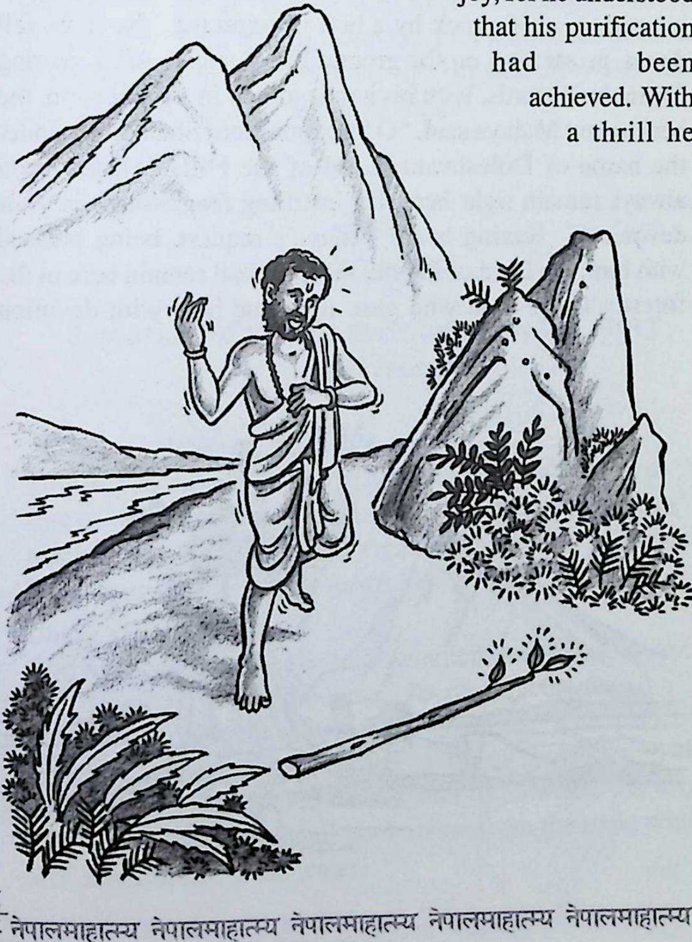
Malaya felt really ashamed when he heard the brahmana's accusations. He quickly took his bath without changing his clothes, and then went to the holy temple of Vishvanatha. Having reverently gazed upon the lingam of the deity, Malaya entered a large open hall called Muktimandapam (pavilion of liberation), which was near the temple. Ascetics reciting the Vedas and other sacred texts congregated there. When Malaya saw those holy brahmanas, he respectfully fell down like a stick before them on the ground, and pleaded, "I am the youngest son of Priyatithi, known as Malaya. I have neither studied the Vedas, nor worshipped Vishveshvara. I have only loved the dice, and whores. Now, out of ignorance I have drunk liquor, erroneously taking it for water. O great ascetics, please tell me how to expiate my misdeeds, so that I may become pure? You all are expert in the Vedas and their auxiliaries. Have mercy in every way on this miserable wretch!" Nobody said a word after Malaya made his piteous plea. For a brahmana, the drinking of alcohol is considered one of the worst transgressions, equivalent to the murdering of another brahmana, theft, or defiling one's preceptor's bed. Association with a person who has committed one of these four great sins is the fifth great sin. Finally, in jest, one of them held out a walking stick to Malaya and mockingly said, "Go on pilgrimage carrying this staff. Exert yourself and toil, wandering from tirtha to tirtha, until this dry stick of wood grows sprouts. When see that happen, you will know that you have become purified, O brahmana's son."



The brahmana only said these words half in jest, to get rid of Malaya's embarrassing presence. To himself, he thought, "This lowlife will never be purified." But Malaya, in his desperation, took the brahmana's words at face value. He saluted reverently Lord Vishveshvara once again, then he bowed down again and again to all the venerable brahmanas, picked up the staff, and earnestly went on pilgrimage.

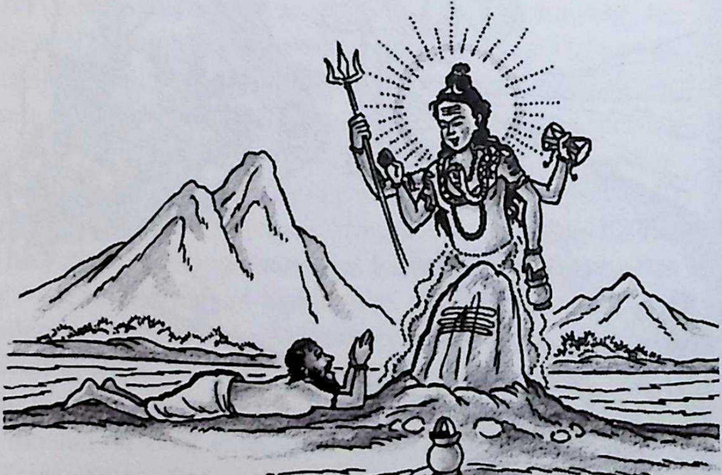
Over the next three years Malaya visited many tirthas and holy places seeking atonement for his sins. He bathed in holy waters, and prayed in temples. Finally one day, his wanderings took him to Shleshmantaka Forest, which is difficult to attain, even for the gods. Upon his arrival there, he performed his ablutions in the Vagmati river and had darshan of Lord Pashupati. Then he visited the shrine of Vajrayogini, and reverently beheld Lord Narayana (at Changu).

He then entered the great forest to visit Ashapureshvara. Before climbing the mountain to get there, Malaya decided to take another bath in a nearby stream, and so he laid down his staff on the ground, and entered the water. While he was bathing, a fresh green sprout appeared on the pilgrim's staff. Coming out of the water, Malaya changed his wet clothes, and reached for his staff. When the wretched Malaya saw his dried-out stick sprouting green buds, he was overwhelmed with joy, for he understood that his purification had been achieved. With a thrill he



thought to himself, "This must be a very rare and sin-removing place. I shall stay here, and worship Maheshvara while strictly upholding my religious vows." Having made his decision, Malaya settled there in the forest on the mountainside. He kept formidable vows, and virtually blazed with the ardor of his severe austerities. Glorious Shiva, the Lord of Parvati, was pleased with Malaya's penance, and having rent asunder the ground in front of him, rose up as a great lingam, and said, "O Malaya, you are purified! Ask for a boon, you who keep your vows so well."

Upon seeing the lingam thrust out of the earth, Malaya jumped up as if struck by a bolt of lightning. Next, he fell down, prostrating on the ground like a stick. After hearing Shambhu's words, with his hands joined in supplication, the benevolent Malaya said, "O Supreme Lord Shankara! Under the name of Doleshvara (Lord of the Hillside), may you always remain right here, for instilling fearlessness in your devotees!" Having heard Malaya's request, being pleased with him, the Lord of Parvati said, "I shall remain here in the forest. Those men who gaze upon me here with devotion



during the month of Kartik (Oct./Nov.) will become denizens of Kailasha, without dispute. Having taken a holy dip in Dhara Tirtha, and having reverently beheld the all-pervading Doleshvara, a steadfast devotee will, by all means, attain my realm. Of that there is no doubt. Furthermore, I will bestow both worldly enjoyments and liberation on those who, full of devotion, have my darshan on the eighth and fourteenth days of the (lunar) months. And you, O Malaya, having always propitiated me with all your your devotion, will become exalted among yogis, and finally will reach the highest state." Having said this to Malaya, the Great God disappeared into the lingam. And Malaya, having propitiated the stainless Doleshvara lingam became the highest of yogis, and ultimately attained the supreme state.

Location of places mentioned in the story

(in order of appearance)

Doleshvara lingam (19)
This lingam is located on the hillside of a small valley to the east of the village of Sipadol, south of Bhaktapur. It can be reached by a one hour walk from the main road to Banepa. The lingam is a naturally formed stone one.

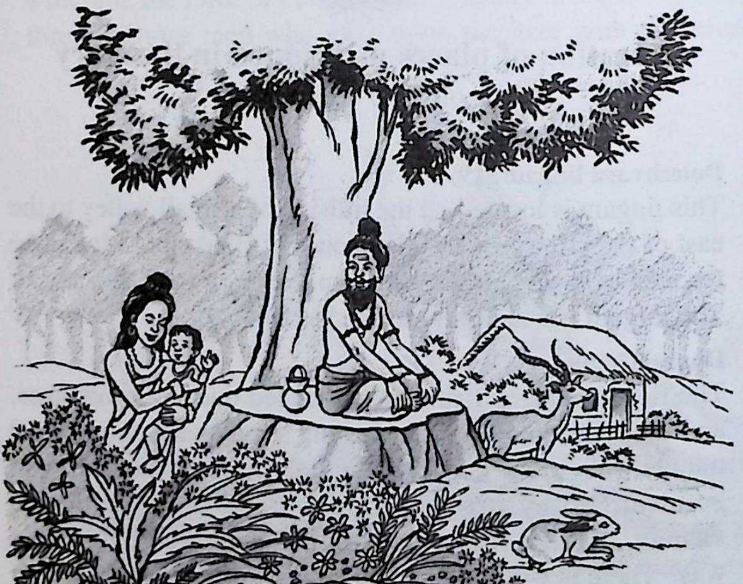
Dhara Tirtha
The flow of Dhara Tirtha has dwindled due to earthquakes, and the river changing course. Its remains are found a 10 minute walk to the northwest of Doleshvara. The tirtha can be identified by two self-formed stone Ganeshas in the vicinity. A large striated rock is said to be where the tirtha was. There is a very small pool across from the rock, which still contains the tirtha water.

6

How Ganesha Appeared Here as Suryavinayaka

To the west of Doleshvara stood the dense Prakanda forest. It was an abundant woodland, adorned with jack-fruit, fragrant mango, and orange trees, brightened by white vaka (Leucas cephalotes) trees, red amaranth trees, and magnolia trees, embellished by sacred fig trees, kovidara (Bauhinia variegata) trees, and banyan trees, and bedecked with various kinds of jasmine, oleander, and other fragrant flowers. The humming of huge black bees, intoxicated with the nectar of the flowers, resounded through the woods.

In that magnificent forest, there lived a certain brahmana muni named Gunanidhi. In the ardency of his austerities, he blazed like the sun. In the practice of forbearance, he was as patient as the earth. Always engaged

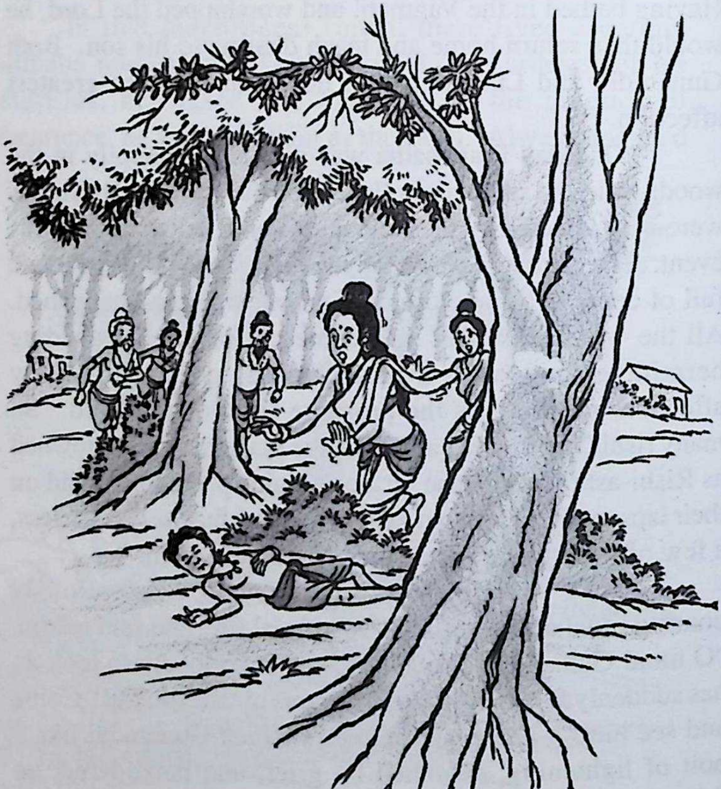


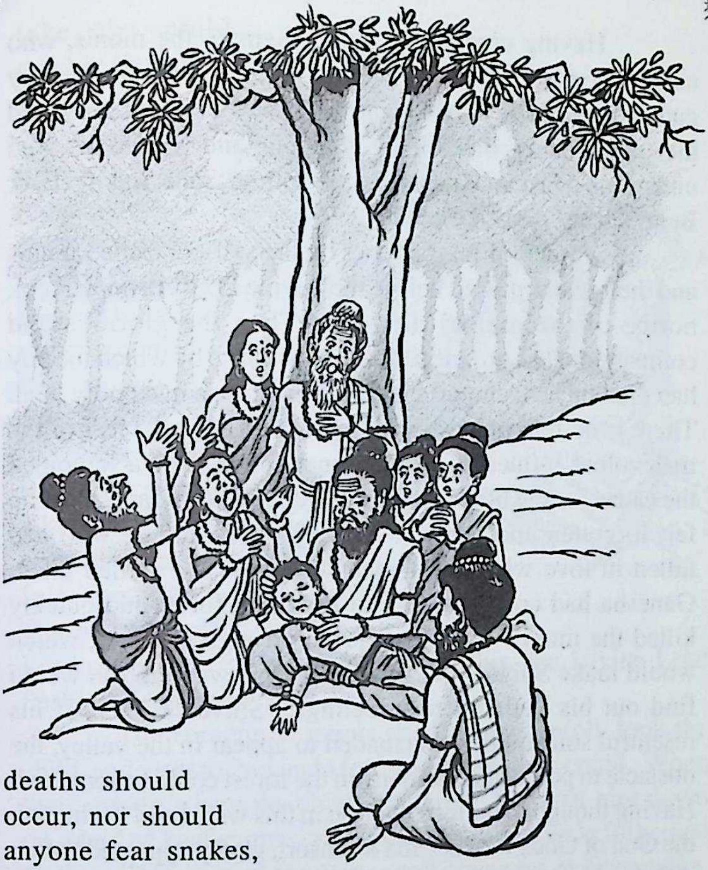
in his austerities, or in the chanting of the scriptures and pondering on their meaning, Gunanidhi had mastered the Vedas with all their auxiliaries (see: Vedanga). His wife, Lilavati, was a very beautiful, and lucky lady. She was absolutely devoted to her husband, and ever prepared to honor like a god any unexpected guest. A son named Prananatha was born to them. He was a most handsome boy, with lovely eyes, and a very fine character. To the parents, Prananatha seemed to be the semblance of their very souls moving about outside their bodies. The child grew day by day, like the moon waxing brighter and brighter. While living in the Prakanda forest, the muni Gunanidhi was ever devoted to Lord Shiva's lotus feet. He visited Pashupati every day. Having bathed in the Vagmati, and worshipped the Lord, he would then return home and teach dharma to his son. Both Gunanidhi and Lilavati raised their son with the greatest affection.

One day Prananatha was wandering happily in the woods, when he suddenly collapsed on the ground. The munis were very affected by the suddenness and seriousness of this event. They immediately stopped their japa and rituals, and full of concern came closer to find out what had happened. All the women ascetics also came out of the surrounding hermitages and, with troubled minds overwhelmed by affection, ran towards the prostrate form of the child. So many rishis lived in that area, that the place became renowned as Rishi-ashrama. Those virtuous munis placed the child on their laps to revive him but, when they saw that he was lifeless, a few of them immediately ran to tell Gunanidhi.

They came upon the father who was zealously pouring ritual oblations into a sacrificial fire, and said to him, "O muni Gunanidhi! Your son, who is so lovely to look at, has suddenly fallen down unconscious on the ground! Come and see him." The terrifying news struck Gunanidhi like a bolt of lightening. Stunned by grief, and bewildered, he fainted. His devoted wife Lilavati came out of their house, and roused her sorrow-stricken husband, saying, "O lord, let us go to that place where they say our son has fallen on the ground." As soon as he heard his wife speaking to him, the muni stood up, and together they started to where their child's lifeless form lay on the other munis' laps. When the parents saw him like that, both Gunanidhi and his wife cried "Oh!" and crumpled on the ground.

The other munis made them get up, as the grieving father lamented, "O Prananatha, why have you gone away and left our lives? O Prananatha, how could you go and leave your mother behind? Take me and your sorrowful mother to where you have gone!" Looking questioningly at the munis, Gunanidhi cried out, "Here in this holy place, no untimely



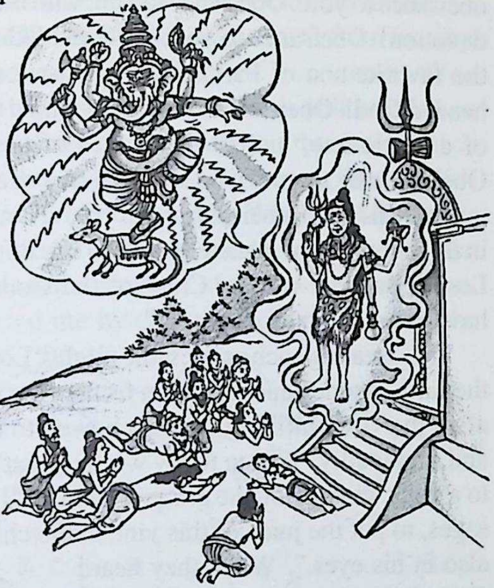


deaths should occur, nor should anyone fear snakes, tigers, or the malevolent influences of the planets. Lord Pashupati is the protector of the helpless, and refuge of the whole world. My wife and I shall go to Him with this child, and having beheld Lord Pashupati with reverence, we shall sit down and fast unto death." Once the idea came to him, the grieving brahmana made up his mind and, placing the child on his shoulder, set out for Pashupati. The assembly of munis, their minds stricken by sorrow, followed him, while his weeping wife walked behind. The good womenfolk of the munis, with their minds set on Shiva, and their hearts filled with pity, followed Lilavati, weeping.

Having crossed the holy Vagmati, the munis, who adhere so strictly to their vows, set the child down at the very gate of Pashupati. All the munis and their wives discontinued the performance of their daily rituals and recitations, and undertook a fast unto death, just chanting "Sada Shiva" (Ever Benevolent One) all the while.

A week of total fasting by the self-controlled munis and their wives passed before the Divine Lord Pashupati took notice of the munis' distress. Then the glorious and compassionate Lord meditated on the cause by which the boy had died in such an untimely fashion, in this most holy land. There is no fear of snakes, or tigers, nor even the fear of the malevolent influence of the planets here. Shiva fathomed the cause for the boy's death was his own son, Ganesha, who felt forgotten and neglected by his divine father, who had fallen in love with Shleshmantaka forest and settled there. Ganesha had come secretly to Prakanda forest and quickly killed the muni's child in order to create a problem, which would make Shiva think of him. In this way the son would find out his Father's true feelings. Shiva saw that if his resentful son could be persuaded to appear in the valley, the obstacle to peace and harmony in the forest could be removed. Having thought over the situation in this way, Lord Pashupati, the God of Gods who is Uma's consort, gladly appeared before the munis.

When those dedicated ascetics saw Lord Pashupati appear before their very eyes, they lay down and prostrated themselves like sticks on the ground. The hair on their bodies stood up out of awe. Shiva looked kindly at the prostrate munis, and said to them, "Listen to my words munis, and don't be afraid. I forgot even my own son because of my unparalleled attachment for Shleshmantaka forest. On account of that, Ganesha's mind was disturbed by the anguish he felt, and so he came secretly to Prakanda forest and, out of anger, killed the muni's child with his divine powers, in order to make his presence felt here. Therefore, all of you munis,

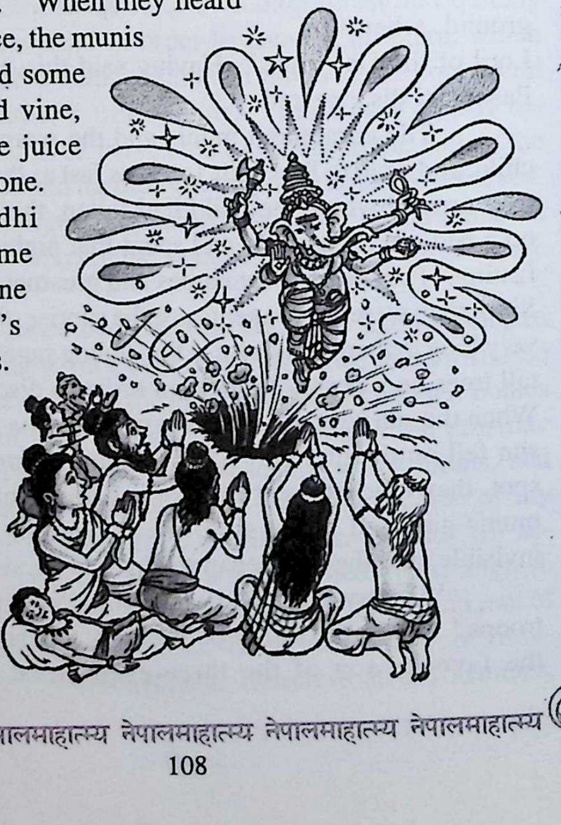


take the child quickly back to Prakanda forest. Ganesha's powers are great. He will revive the child. There is nothing more to ponder in this case. My son will surely be invisibly there where the first rays of the sun fall on the ground, when the Lord of the Day rises." Having said this, the Divine Lord Pashupati disappeared.

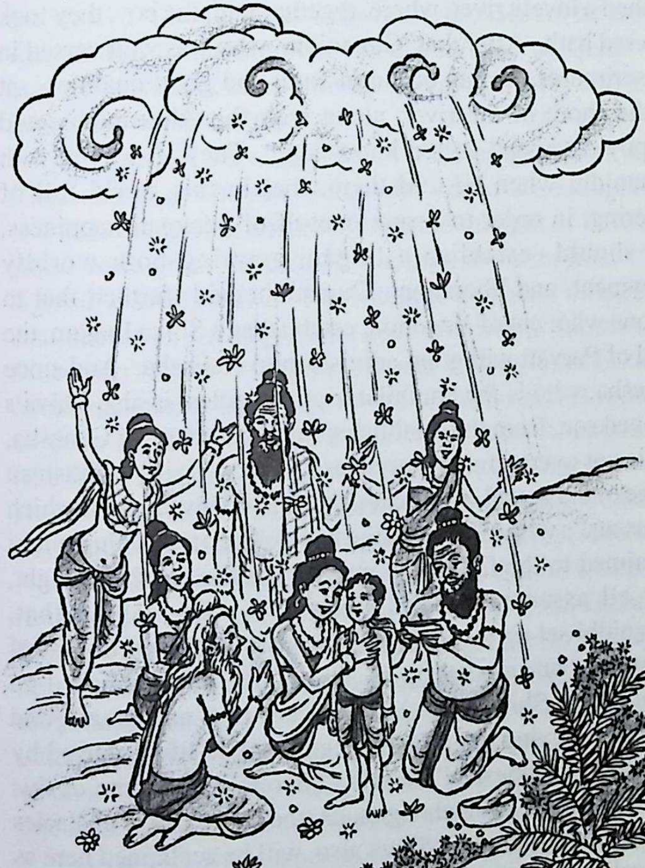
The enraptured munis and the womenfolk took the child, and went to Prakanda forest as fast as they could. When they arrived where the child had fallen, they put him down on a bed of kusha grass, and spent that night wakefully, just fasting. They recited the names and greatness of Gananatha. Since they were very eager to see the sunrise, the night seemed very long to them. At dawn, a few young sages climbed some tall trees on a nearby hillock, in order to discover the place. When the sun rose, the munis saw where the first rays of the sun fell on the ground. After having determined the exact spot, they quickly went to inform Gunanidhi. Then all the munis gathered at the spot where Ganesha was, although invisible, and they all began to chant his praises like this:

"Victory to the God who is the Commander of Shiva's troops ! Obeisance be to you, Ruler of obstacles! Victory to the favorite son of the three-eyed Great God (Shiva), obeisance to you! Obeisance to you, who is accessible through devotion! Obeisance to you, the God of Gods! Obeisance to the favorite son of Parvati, and obeisance to the elephant-headed God! Obeisance to the four-armed God, to the holder of a battle axe, and to the slayer of the devotee's fear! Obeisance be to you, who are fond of sweets! O One with a noose in his hand, obeisance be to you! Though we are lacking in devotion to you, please restore to life this child of ours', O Lord! Become visible, Chief of the Gods! Save us, who have come to you for refuge!"

Hearing such praises, the mighty Lord Gananatha rent the earth asunder, and rose up in front of the munis. He looked at all the vow-fulfilling ascetics bowed to him in reverence, and said loudly, "Listen to my words, great sages!" Pointing to a plant winding on the ground, he said, "I advise you, great sages, to put the juice of this vine in the child's mouth, and also in his eyes." When they heard Ganesha's advice, the munis quickly gathered some of the specified vine, and pressed the juice out of it on a stone. Then Gunanidhi himself put some juice of the vine into the child's mouth and eyes. As soon as he did that, Prananatha suddenly got up, like a man risen from sleep. The cry of "Jaya!"



('victory') rose immediately from the lips of the munis. A beautiful shower of flowers fell upon the earth from the sky. Ganesha spoke to the overjoyed munis once more, "You fortunate folk, ask me for any boon which still remains in your minds." The munis all prostrated on the ground once more, and said to the Leader of the Troops, "Stay in this Prakanda forest forever, O Ganesha!" When he heard their request, Ganesha said, "I will stay always right here in the forest, and be the constant remover of all the devotees' fears. Since you discovered me by observing the first rays of the



sun, I will be known here as Suryavinayaka (Ganesha of the Sun'). Those who reverently visit me on the fourth days of the bright and dark halves of the lunar months, and on Tuesdays, will never fear any obstacles." In recognition of Ganesha's power, the munis performed reverent salutations again and again. Finally, they all set off towards the north. Since then, Suryavinayaka dwells constantly in the Prakanda forest. Just from having his darshan one is not overpowered by obstacles.

Having gone in the northern direction, the munis reached a lovely river, where, together with the boy, they took a sacred bath. After that, Gunanidhi, who was well versed in the scriptures, and an ocean of truth and good qualities, sat by the shore of the river, along with the other munis, and happily discussed sacred knowledge. They all agreed with Gunanidhi when he told them, that in this world full of suffering, in order to assure oneself of personal happiness, one should establish a lingam granting both worldly enjoyment, and liberation. Gunanidhi said further, that to anyone who, out of devotion, establishes a Shiva lingam, the Lord of Parvati will grant admission to Kailasha. And since Ganesha, who is the annihilator of obstacles, is also Shiva's beloved son, from the establishment of an image of Ganesha, one is not overcome by obstacles. "Today I will establish an image of the great Lord Gananatha, and a Shiva lingam which grants one's wishes, here on the bank of the river," Gunanidhi exclaimed to the farsighted munis. Thrilled at the thought, they all assented, "Good! Right!" After saying that, Gunanidhi set up a statue of Ganesha. To the north-east of the statue, surrounded by all the munis, he established an unsurpassed Shiva linga. "This very rare and great good fortune of having our child brought back to life occurred by the grace of Ganesha," he said, "therefore the name of this Ganesha will be Mangalavighnaha (the Destroyer of obstacles towards good fortune). Shiva also, will be acclaimed here as Mangaleshvara (the Lord creating good fortune). This place, where Shiva, Ganesha, and Shanmukha (the Six-faced God, Skanda) are all established, may rightly be called 'Mangala Tirtha', and will surely be a bestower of great good fortune. Having ritually bathed in Mangala Tirtha, having given auspicious offerings in charity there, and having reverently beheld Mangaleshvara lingam, one will be released from all sins. Then Gunanidhi, along with his wife, son, and hosts of munis, joyfully returned to his ashram.

The Mangaleshvara lingam, destroyer of great sins, is located north-east of Mangalavighnaha Ganesha, and to the west of Tilamadhava. Anyone, whomsoever he may be, who listens to the story of the appearance of Ganesha as Suryavinayaka, attains true devotion to Shiva, and is not overcome by obstacles.

Finally, the munis well versed in dharma, living at Rishi-ashrama, who saw Gunanidhi's dead son brought back to life, became very absorbed with the thought of Shiva, and filled with great devotional feelings towards him. They sighted a lovely hill in the distance, and after climbing it, established an incomparable, beautiful Shiva lingam there. Since this lingam was properly and ritually established by countless munis, who were aware of the bountiful influence of devotion to Shiva, its name was set as Anantalingam (the lingam of the countless). It is said that having beheld Anantalingam, a person is released from all sins. A staunch person, who reverently beholds that most beautiful Anantalingam, will find true devotion to Shiva, which is so rare in the world today. In this age of Kali, the Great God Shiva will gladly grant their heart's desire to those who become devotees of Anantalingam. Lord Shiva will appear to the devotees who have a reverent darshan of Anantalingam, either on the fourteenth day of the lunar month, or the eighth, or on a Sankranti day, when the sun or a planet passes from one sign of the zodiac to the next.

In this way Ganesha settled in Nepal, blessing and protecting the region.

Location of places mentioned in the story

(in order of appearance)

Rishi-ashrama
The southern part of Suryavinayaka hill was once called Rishi Ashrama. There is a military camp nearby there.

Suryavinayaka (20)
The popular shrine of Suryavinayaka is located on a hillside about two kilometers south of Bhaktapur. The miraculous and curative powers of the elephant-headed god's image here continue to be associated with children–it is believed to give the ability to speak to children who are slow at it.

Mangala Tirtha
Mangaleshwara lingam is located on the southern outskirts of Bhaktapur, in Mangalache Tol. The tirtha bathing place is at Mangal Ghat on the bank of the Hanumante river. The Mangalavighnaha Ganesha shrine is found at the top of a flight of steps leading from the ghat.

Anantalingeshvara (21)
This lingam can be found five kilometers south-west of Bhaktapur near Gundu village. After Gundu, one climbs a flight of stairs on the wooded eastern slope of Risal Dhara, to reach the peaceful temple compound. The lingam is called 'Antalingeshwor' locally. It is a naturally-formed stone one. Its annual festival is celebrated on the new moon day (aunshi) in the month of Vaishakh (Apr./May).

Tilamadhava
The temple of Tilamadhava is located south of Taumarhi Square in Bhaktapur. According to the *Nepala Mahatmya*, it commemorates the miraculous appearance of a statue of Vishnu (Madhava) in a pile of sesame seeds (tila), being sold at the roadside by a merchant named Dharmadatta. The merchant himself vanished into the statue after worshipping it. There are special celebrations at this, and other Vishnu shrines, on Tila Sankranti, the first day of Magha (Nov./Dec.).

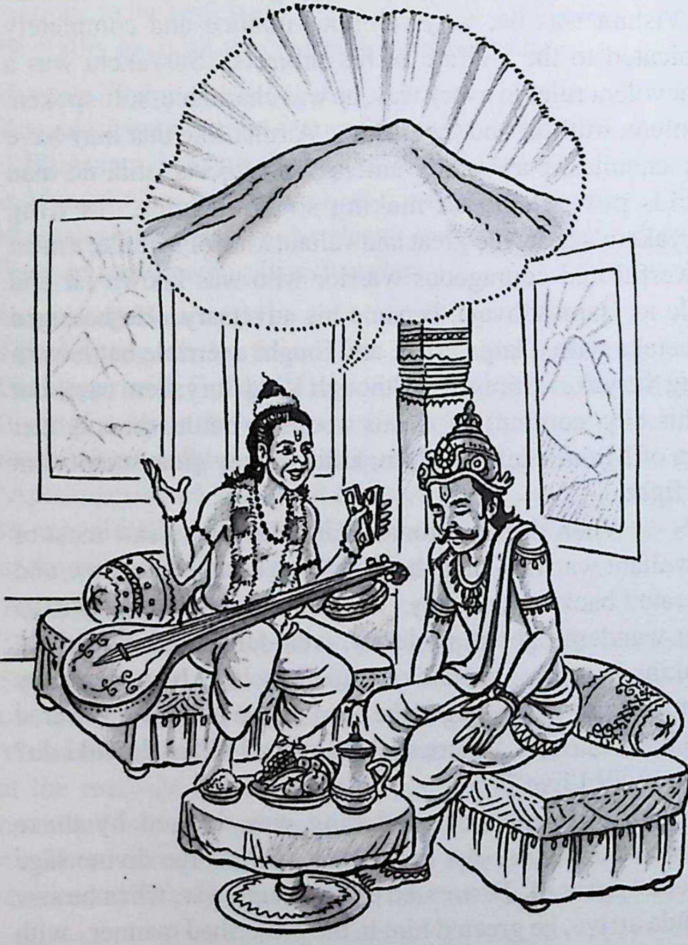
7

How Shri Krishna Saved the Sacred Valley When it Was Flooded by a Mighty Demon, or the Victory of Pradyumna

In the land of Champakaranya there was a superlative city called Shvetaka. It was often compared to Indra's Amaravati, for cities like that were hard to find on earth. The ruler of that city was the peerless King Suryaketu. A devotee of Vishnu was he, very religious-minded and completely dedicated to the welfare of his subjects. Suryaketu was a benevolent ruler in every way, he was charitable, soft-spoken, resolute, truthful and handsome. A ruler like that may have few enemies, particularly among his subjects; still, no man wields power without making some enemies. In King Suryaketu's case, the great and valiant king of Mithila, a most powerful and courageous warrior who was known far and wide as Hamsadhvaja, became his adversary. He besieged Shvetaka with a large army, and fought a terrible battle with King Suryaketu himself. Although King Suryaketu came out of his city, committing all his troops to battle, the mightier king of Mithila defeated him, killing many great warriors in the fight.

When the unfortunate King Suryaketu saw most of his valiant warriors slain, he decided to escape somehow, and retreated back into the city. Inside his sumptuous palace the king wandered about aimlessly, crest-fallen and powerless, thinking in terror over and over to himself, "My great enemy Hamsadhvaja has besieged the city! I have been overpowered by a bold warrior! Where shall I go next? What should I do? Where will I live?"

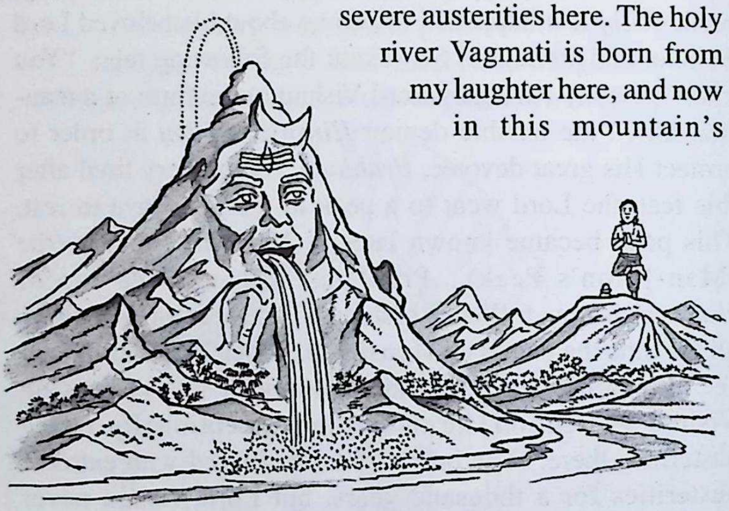
While the defeated king was dogged by these desperate thoughts, just in the nick of time, the divine sage Narada appeared. Distressed as Suryaketu was, when he saw Narada arrive, he greeted him in the prescribed manner - with his head bowed low and his hands respectfully folded. Then the king worshipped Narada as befits an unexpected and honored guest and a great sage, as well. After he saw to it that Narada was comfortable and at ease, the anguished king wailed out, "My city is surrounded by Hamsadhvaja! The defenses have been breached! I cannot stay here much longer! Where shall I live now? Tell me that, O virtuous muni!" As soon as he heard the king's desperate pleas, Narada had a ready reply for him, "O king! Take yourself to Mrigendrashikhara Mountain from whence the Vagmati, choicest of



rivers, flows. Make a very secret residence for yourself in that place." Defeated as he was, King Suryaketu became immediately interested in Narada's suggestion, and inquired of him, "This beautiful Vagmati, which you call the choicest of rivers, how was it born on Mrigendrashikara? Tell us specifically about that, O great muni."

Narada was always happy to narrate a story, particularly if it happened to be one about his beloved Lord Vishnu, and so he told Suryaketu the following tale: "You know how my Almighty Lord Vishnu in the form of a man-lion killed the terrible demon *Hiranyakashipu* in order to protect His great devotee, *Prahlada*. Being very tired after this feat, the Lord went to a peak in the Himalaya to rest. This peak became known later as Mrigendrashikara (the [Man-]Lion's Peak). Prahlada, who was the son of Hiranyakashipu, followed Vishnu to Himavan, while reciting all the time the names of *Narasimha*. When Prahlada did not see his Lord on the peak, finding no other way of drawing Vishnu's attention, he undertook exceptionally fierce austerities there. The best of demons blazed with extreme austerities for a thousand years, but Lord Vishnu never appeared to him.

"Luckily for Prahlada, he had undertook his austerities in a place imbued with the power of Shiva, the God who is easily pleased (Ashutosha). Shiva felt pity for Prahlada. The Great God was so happy with these austerities performed in His place by a devotee of Vishnu, that He laughed out loud. That booming laughter rolling out of His mouth took the form of an unsullied river, swirling with sacred water, and whitened by garlands of foamy waves, arising and flowing forth out of the mouth of a cave in the mountain. Shiva said to Prahlada, 'Since this river is manifested from my voice, her name must certainly be Vagmati (related with the voice). Since Vishnu in the form of an extraordinary lion stayed here, this will also be a Vaishnava holy place. Its upper part will be an auspicious place of mine, filled with shivalingams. On account of that, people will know it as Shivapuri. Return home, Prahlada. May your devotion to Vishnu be firm. Having become the lord and master of the demons, may you rule over your father's kingdom. This peak called Mrigendra-shikhara will be a Vaishnava holy place, because *Narahari* rested here after slaying Hiranyakashipu, and you, O lord of the demons, a devotee of Vishnu, underwent severe austerities here. The holy river Vagmati is born from my laughter here, and now in this mountain's upper portion are many lingams born of my power. Therefore a man who bathes in the source of the Vagmati, and pays a reverent visit to Shivapuri, will undoubtedly be released from all the sins he may have committed in previous births.'



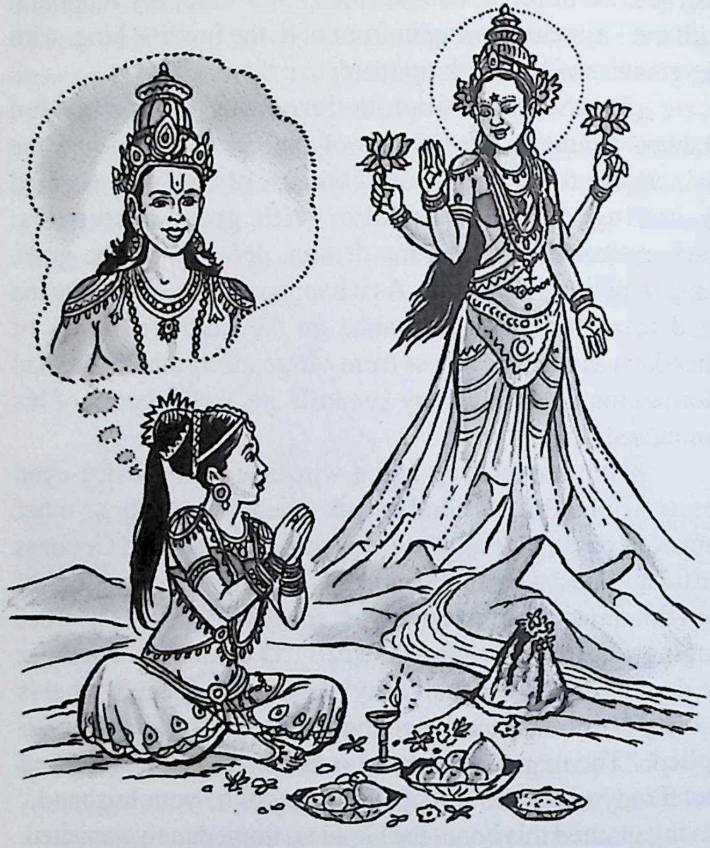
"After saying this, the God whose standard is emblazoned with a bull (Nandi) disappeared, along with his entourage. The contented demon Prahlada returned to his own palace." Narada ended his story by exhorting the king, "O Suryaketu, go to Mrigendrashikhara! By the grace of Shri *Krishna*, you will eventually get Shvetaka back. Ultimately, you will go bodily to heaven, rest assured!"

After telling all of this to King Suryaketu, and having been worshipped thoroughly by him, Narada went on his way. King Suryaketu, along with his wife, a daughter named Chandravati, and joined by many of his surviving warriors and followers, escaped to Mrigendrashikhara, as Narada instructed him to. When he finally saw that holy mountain with the Vagmati flowing in front of it, the fugitive king, with the greatest of joy, took up residence there.

In the meantime, a ferocious demon called Mahendradamana (Conqueror of the Great Indra) became invincible in the all three worlds because of a boon he received by having propitiated Shiva with great austerities. Unconquerable in battle, the demon, defeated all the gods, along with the Great Indra. As it happened, Mahendradamana lived in a city called Suprabha on the northern slopes of Chandana Mountain, across from Mrigendrashikhara. He had adorned the city with many beautiful gems, the booty of his conquests.

The demon king had a winsome sister, a doe-eyed beauty named Princess Prabhavati. There was surely no other damsel as passionate as her. This princess propitiated Goddess Vatsala. Pleased by the demoness' worship, the daughter of the Himalaya spoke to her, "Ask for the boon your heart is longing for, O lovely-hipped lady." "O Goddess," cried out the demoness, "What shall I say? You know for sure what is in every creature's heart, including mine..." To which Parvati replied, "The man of your heart is known to me, O doe-eyed one. Pradyumna, the son of Krishna, will be your husband." Having granted this boon, the Goddess immediately vanished. As soon as she received her boon, Prabhavati returned to the city of Suprabha. There, on the summit of Chandana Mountain, her brother Mahendradamana had created for her a pleasure garden, as big and beautiful as the Indra's heavenly Nandana grove.

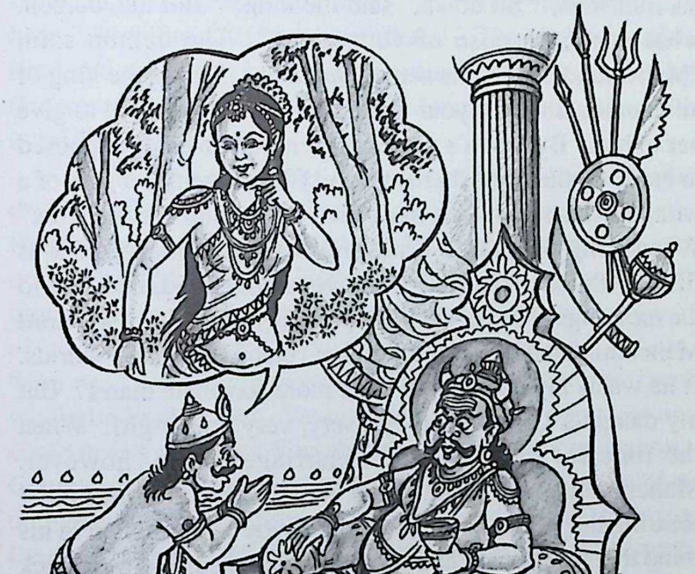
One day the arrogant demon, who was as huge as a mountain, out of sheer vanity blocked the Vagmati flowing out of the valley with a hill. The great Shleshmantaka Forest became a deep lake, adorned with lotuses and lilies. All the demons living in Suprabha were delighted with this new pond for them to cavort in.



Now, on the other side of the great lotus pond, which was once Shleshmantaka Forest, King Suryaketu was living quietly. As soon as he recognized his neighbor across the lake to be the invincible Mahendradamana, King Suryaketu personally sent to him a tribute of many marvelous gems. This flattered the proud demon. After that, he looked on King Suryaketu favorably, and the king lived without any fear of the demon. But his most marvelous gem was still hidden from the eyes of this dangerous neighbor.

While wandering on Mrigendrashikhara one day, a certain demon of Mahendradamana's sighted King

Suryaketu's young daughter innocently playing. She appeared to the demon to be even more beautiful than *Rambha,* the apsara. The demon returned immediately to Suprabha, and quickly described everything he saw to his master. "O king of the demons, listen to my words," he said to the haughty Mahendradamana. "I have seen King Suryaketu's charming daughter wandering about on Mrigendrashikhara. Nowhere among humans is there another woman of such beauty. Truly, the daughter of Suryaketu is an incomparable gem among women! In this world, my Lord, you are the one who has won the right to enjoy all the best gems, and she is the most



excellent jewel of a woman. No one else on the face of this earth but you, Sir, is fit to be her husband."

A thrill, like a bolt of lightening, jolted Mahendradamana when he heard the bold demon's news. "What you have told me is a fact, O best of demons!", he exclaimed. "Do whatever is necessary, so that Suryaketu will give his daughter to me without fail. Go to Mrigendrashikhara, my excellent demon, and ask King Suryaketu for his daughter for me."

Having received this command, the demon went to Mrigendrashikhara, where he found the king in council with his ministers. "Sit down," said the king. "Tell me, demon, what is the purpose of your visit?" The demon said, "Mahendradamana, the son of *Banasura*, who is the king of all demons, asks for your daughter. It behooves you to give her to him. By Shiva's grace, Mahendradamana is supposed to enjoy all the gems there are, and Chandravati is a gem of a woman. Therefore you must give her to him for his wife." When King Suryaketu heard the envoy's demand, he was filled with fear. He thought it over in his mind, and said to the messenger, "No doubt what you say is quite true, sir. Lord Mahendradamana is the sovereign ruler of the three worlds. If he wants my daughter, who is more fortunate than I? But my daughter Chandravati is a very, very young girl. When the time for my daughter's marriage comes, however, Mahendradamana's command will certainly be obeyed." Hearing the words of the king, the envoy was satisfied in his mind that his mission had been accomplished. He went back to Mahendradamana, and reported everything to him.

King Suryaketu became very worried. "Now I have gone from bad to worse," he thought. "After this, what shall I do next? First, I had to give up Shvetaka, and now a mighty demon wants my daughter. It will be quite impossible for me to stay further on Mrigendrashikhara."

Just as King Suryaketu was troubled by these worries, the most virtuous muni Narada arrived. As soon as King

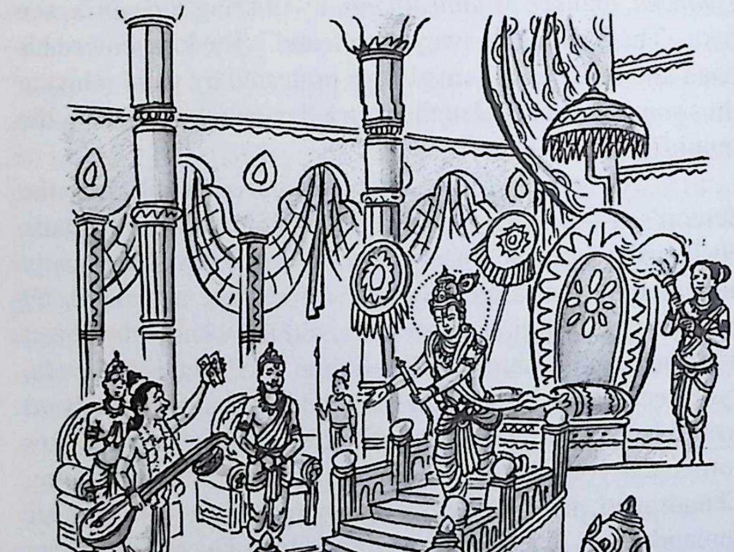
Suryaketu saw Narada, he moved forward and worshipped him according to the scriptural injunctions. Once Narada had taken a seat, the king spoke to him, "The demon Mahendradamana is asking for my daughter. How can I but have an altercation with this demon, while living on Mrigendrashikhara? What shall I do in this situation, O Narada?"

Narada did not have to think at all about the answer. He just said, "O King Suryaketu, most excellent of monarchs, do not be afraid anymore. You should really give your daughter to Shri Krishna's son, Pradyumna. After I go to *Dvaraka*, and see *Madhusudana*, I will bring *Rukmini's* son here. Therefore, cast away your fears!" The king bowed his head and said, "Sir, I am always protected by you." Having thus somewhat consoled the worried monarch and father, the muni flew away.

As he was flying, Narada noticed Prabhavati, the demon's sister, in her garden on top of Chandana Mountain. He flew down and approached her. When the ravishing beauty noticed him, she saluted Narada with respect, and asked, "O muni, rich in religious austerities, tell me what is the object of your coming here." "Some time ago", replied Narada, "you received a boon from the Goddess that your husband would be Pradyumna. Yet until now, Krishna's son has not come near you. King Suryaketu's daughter, the enchanting Chandravati, is intended for Pradyumna, but your brother demands her. I am now on my way to Dvaraka to bring Pradyumna here. Once he is here, he will also unite with you."

Prabhavati listened to Narada's revelation, and then replied, "O great sage knowing the three times, you know everything! But listen! At the opening gate of the Vagmati there is a very dreadful great demon named Sankha. The dammed-up outflowing gate of the Vagmati is guarded by another great demon, the tortoise-like Kacchapa asura. And, by the way, my brother also, is quite unconquerable. How exactly will Pradyumna prevail in this situation?" "O fawn-eyed lady!" said Narada, "What you say is quite true. But do not worry. Everything will work out, just do not go to Suprabha anymore. Stay here, passionate young beauty, where there is no danger due to your brother's influence, and expect us." Having said this, Narada set out for the city of Dvaraka, while Prabhavati remained on the summit of Chandana Mountain.

When the wise Narada arrived in Dvaraka, he found Krishna sitting in council, surrounded by the *Yadavas*. Seeing Narada, *Govinda* received him as the custom dictates. He

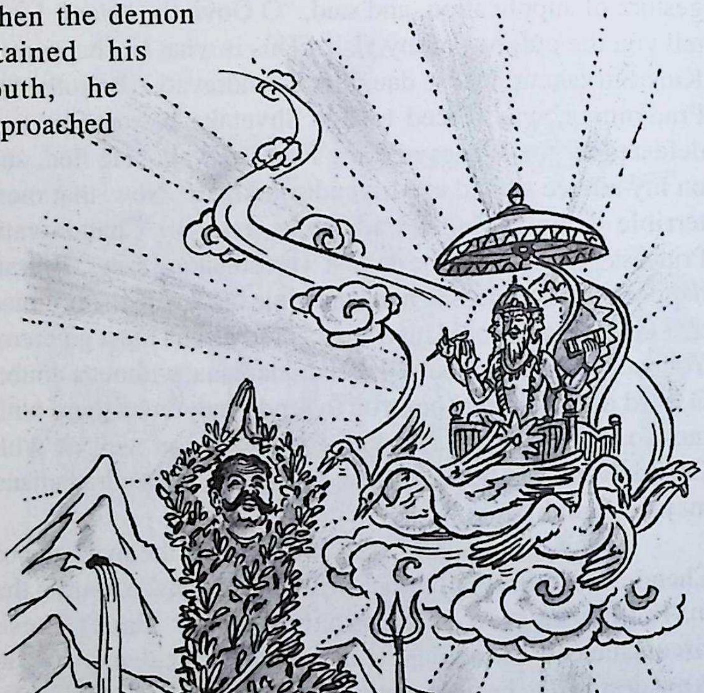


rose, praising his own good fortune, and approached the guest with a happy, welcoming smile. Having ushered Narada inside, Krishna worshipped him thoroughly. Once the rishi was comfortably seated, his host smiled, and inquired, "O brahmana, where do you come from, and what extraordinary events have you seen on your way? Most virtuous of munis, our house is sanctified by your visit. Our whole clan is purified by your presence. What may be the cause of your coming?"

Narada was thrilled to hear Govinda speaking such words to him. He joined his hollowed hands together in a gesture of supplication, and said, "O Govinda, listen! I will tell you the purpose of my visit. This is what has happened. King Suryaketu, whose daughter Chandravati is betrothed to Pradyumna, was forced to flee Shvetaka because he was defeated by the armies of King Hamsadhvaja. He fled, and on my advice settled at Mrigendrashikhara. Now, that most terrible demon, Mahendradamana, asks for Chandravati. Princess Prabhavati is the demon's breathtaking sister. Parvati happens to have blessed her some time back with the promise that Pradyumna would marry her. Pradyumna must go there. Your son is the one to kill Mahendradamana, without a doubt. O Lord of the Gods, I beg you to send Pradyumna there with me, so that his marriage with Prabhavati, as well as with Chandravati, may be performed, and so that Mahendradamana may be slain by him."

"But, great sage," replied Krishna, "the marriage of Chandravati with Pradyumna will not take place, unless the invincible demon is eliminated first. Under these circumstances, I should go with you to kill the demon." "He is not destined to be your victim, O Madhava," replied Narada. "Only Pradyumna can kill him. I have it from the mouth of Brahma Himself." "How did you hear that?", asked Krishna. "Whose son is this Mahendradamana, and what sort of demon is he? How did he defeat the great Indra? Tell me the whole story."

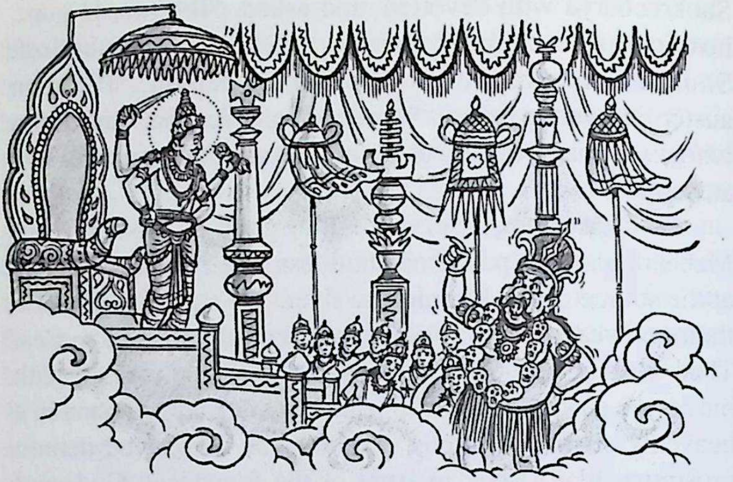
Narada was only too happy to oblige. "In the city of Shonita," he began, "there happened to live a demon king named Bana, and his wife, Rohini, who was very devoted to her husband. They had a son who, from the beginning, seemed to be destined to bring terror to the Gods, for as soon as he was born, there was a great earthquake, and at that very moment, Indra's left eye throbbed, a clearly inauspicious sign for the the thousand-eyed king of the Gods. Forseeing that the demon would one day subdue the great Indra, Shukracharya, the preceptor of the demons, assigned the name Mahendradamana (Conqueror-of-the-Great-Indra) to the boy. When the demon attained his youth, he approached



Shukracharya with devotion, and asked, 'Tell me, O guru, how can one conquer Indra?' Hearing the question, Shukracharya replied to the young demon, 'Perform austerities, young fellow. Success is achieved that way. Indra who is so hard to defeat in battle can be conquered by austerities.'

"Having received the guru's instruction, Mahendradamana performed faultless austerities at the tirtha at the source of the Rudradhara river. He stayed there for a thousand years, living solely on air, and subduing his senses. Then Brahma, the Guru of the World, became pleased with his severe austerities, and appeared to Mahendradamana in a heavenly chariot, glorious like the sun. The awed demon prostrated like a stick in front of the four-faced God, and said, 'If you are pleased with me, O Elder of the Gods, grant me the boon I desire, which is that I always be unconquerable in battle with all the Gods.' The Grandfather of the World listened to the demon's request, and replied, 'O demon, what desire is in your mind, let it be so, just as you wish it.' Having granted the boon, the Lord went back to His realm in His heavenly chariot.

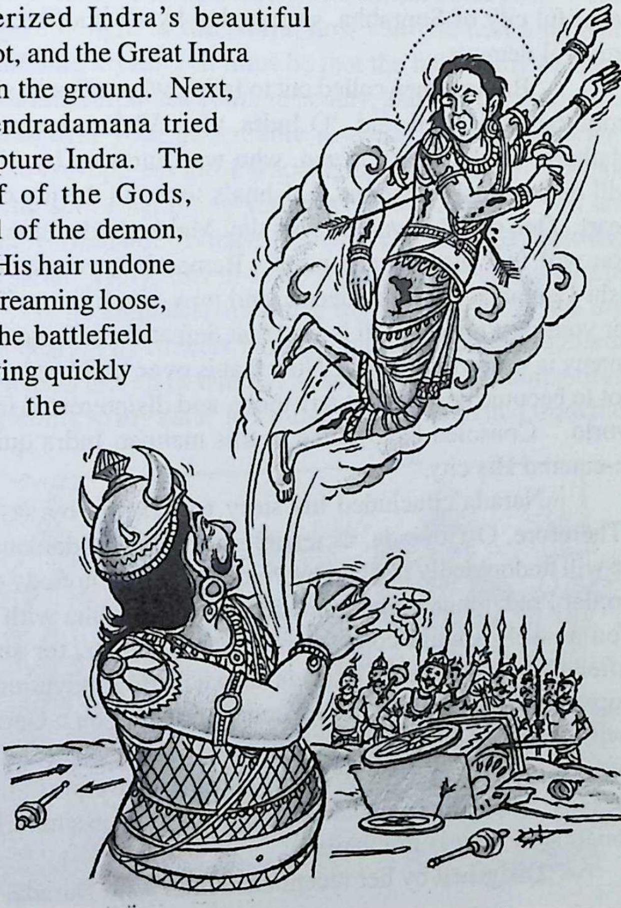
"After he received his boon, Mahendradamana was joined by many mighty demons, and Shukracharya anointed him as the king of the demons. After some time, in consultation with his ministers, he sent an envoy named Kushmanda to the presence of Indra. Entering the council hall of Indra, Kushmanda of terrible prowess said to Indra, in front of all the Gods there, 'The Self-born Brahma has given dominion over the worlds to my master, O Indra! Kingdoms are for the delectation of the brave! Therefore, you might as well quit your kingdom.' When he heard Kushmanda's brazen words, Indra's mind became agitated with rage. In reply, he spoke out these words in front of the gathering, 'Kingdoms are for the delight of the brave, this is true without a doubt. But the valiant do not quit a kingdom without a battle, O demon. Kushmanda, go tell the son of Bana that whatever



his prowess, strength, and courage may be, he must prove them to me.'

"The envoy returned in a rage, and told Mahendradamana what Indra had said. Having received the message, the demon king put his younger brother, Kacchapa (tortoise), along with another demon, Shankha (conch), in front of a terrible army of demons, and set out for the beautiful city of Indra. Soon the demons had surrounded Amaravati, and Mahendradamana was camped in the Nandana grove, eager for battle.

"When Indra saw Mahendradamana camping with his army in the Nandana grove, He came out of his city, with the army of the Gods in front of him. Because of the loud rumbling of the chariots, the thundering of the drums, the neighing of the horses, and the trumpeting of the elephants, nothing could be heard. Then Shankha bellowed a great roar, and a shower of arrows fell on both armies. The army of the Gods was soon overwhelmed, and fled away. When that happened, Indra himself went into battle. He covered the demons with torrential showers of sharp arrows, cutting off arms, legs, and heads all around. It was now the turn of the army of the demons to be routed. When Shankha saw his army retreating, he became completely enraged, and attacked, roaring in a loud voice. A most terrible battle between Indra and Shankha ensued. Exacting revenge on Indra for what he had done to the demons, the dreadful Shankha pierced Indra's chest with seven powerful arrows. But being wounded only raised Indra's anger. With great dexterity of hand, he hit each one of Shankha's four horses with an arrow, and dispatched with one the charioteer, as well. He then landed ten arrows in Shankha's chest, piercing his vitals. Seeing Shankha wearied, Mahendradamana angrily pulverized Indra's beautiful chariot, and the Great Indra fell on the ground. Next, Mahendradamana tried to capture Indra. The Chief of the Gods, afraid of the demon, with His hair undone and streaming loose, quit the battlefield by flying quickly into the sky.

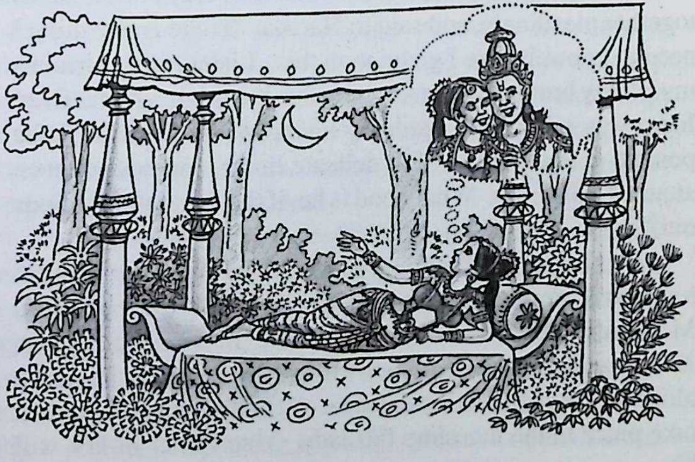


"Just as the victorious Mahendradamana began to enter Amaravati in triumph, he was intercepted by the four-faced Brahma in a heavenly chariot. 'O brave demon, I command you not to stay in Indra's city,' said Brahma to the victor. 'You have earned great fame, and proven the truth of your name. You should now live in Suprabha, you and your demons who are so hot for battle. All the gems in the three worlds, which are for the delectation of the brave, by my command, will be delivered to Suprabha.' When he heard Brahma's command, Mahendradamana set out for the beautiful city of Suprabha, surrounded by all his fierce and dreadful demons.

"Brahma then called out to Indra, who was still shaky from the battle, and said, 'O Indra, after Vishnu appears in Mathura (as Krishna), *Kama*, who was burnt up by Shiva, will be born as Pradyumna, Krishna's son, and the joy of his heart. One day Pradyumna will slay Mahendradamana, and you will feel secure once more. Remember, you seduced rishi Gautama's wife by deceit, and now you have suffered for your past misdeed. It is said that defeat at the hand of an enemy is worse than death. Now that is over, and I order you not to become despondent any more, and disinterested in the world.' Consoled by Brahma in this manner, Indra quietly re-entered His city."

Narada concluded his story to Krishna by saying, "Therefore, O Govinda, as terrible as Mahendradamana is, he will undoubtedly be slain by Pradyumna, and nobody else. So, let Pradyumna come immediately to Suprabha with me. You as well, should come there in the morning, for sure." After Narada's speech, Krishna dispatched Pradyumna to Suprabha with the rishi. Pradyumna, mounted on a Garuda, swiftly reached the summit of Chandana Mountain, beautified by numerous trees, and covered with the flowers of all the seasons. There, in a wonderful arbor, reclining on a luxurious couch lay Princess Prabhavati.

Disturbed by her recent encounter with Narada, and bathed in the autumn moonlight, Prabhavati was thinking with an aching heart about Pradyumna, and about Parvati's unfulfilled boon. Tormented by Kama's arrows, Prabhavati berated the moon. She cried, "O Moon! You were born in the ocean of milk, and live on Shiva's forehead. You are the divine ocean of nectar, and supposedly cool by nature. Tell me then, why have you become so inflamed with anger, and your rays feel so scorching? Why do you assault this helpless maiden? O Moon, you are a comfort to the eyes of the *chakora* bird, and are said to be cooling like sandalwood paste! You who give delight to the world, how can you hurt a pitiable creature like myself? It must be that the face of my beloved Pradyumna surpasses yours in beauty, and so you wound his beloved with your unbearable rays. O Moon, you wane because you oppress those who are separated. Yet you do not shun the act of harassing young women. O Moon, you are like the Terminator (Yama). But what can I do? My beloved is not near. Truly, this ill-fated Kama steals one's very life away. He is relentlessly draining my spirit away. I feel my end is near! The flowers burn my mind. Even the southern breeze feels like an ill wind. The sound of the humming bees is deafening to my ears. My mind becomes agitated from the



sweet song of the cuckoo. I feel great passion, but what can I do, the son of Madhava has not approached me? The God of Love, who springs up in the heart with his bow of flowers, is more cruel than a butcher. I am but a young girl in the bloom of my youth. My limbs are delicate like acacia flowers. Parvati gave me the boon that Pradyumna would be my husband. He has not arrived till now. What shall I do next?"

While Prabhavati was rebuking the moon in so many ways, she was startled by the sight of Pradyumna with Narada, arriving through the sky. "Is this the sun, or the God of Fire descending upon me," she exclaimed. As Prabhavati was appraising the situation, in an inkling, Narada and Pradyumna stood before her. Seeing the muni with a vina in his hand accompanied by Pradyumna, the princess stood up and rendered respectful salutations unto them. Meanwhile, the most virtuous muni Narada said to Prabhavati, "O princess, Hari's son has arrived. Here he is! Look at him! The one whom you desired so much, who was vouchsafed by Parvati to be your husband, is the veritable ideal of beauty. May you serve this son of Hari after undergoing a *Gandharva marriage*. Today, O doe-eyed one, may your heart's desire be fulfilled!"

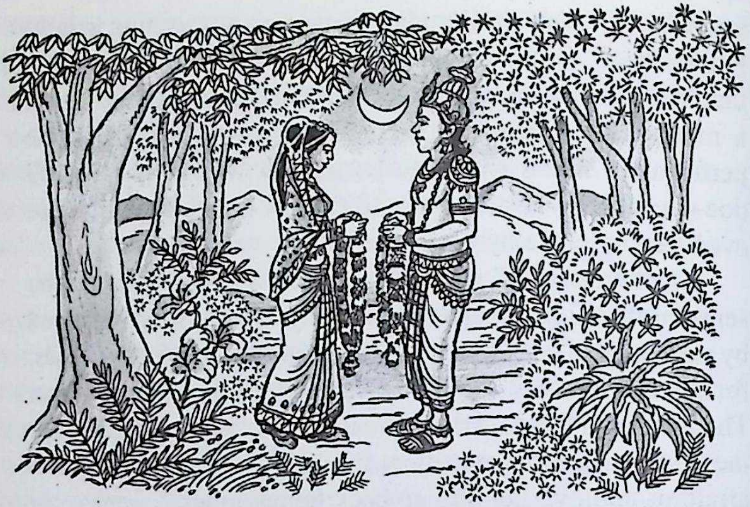
But Prabhavati, excited as she was, only put her hands together pleadingly, and said to Narada, "There is one thing I need to know, before I go on with this. Listen, most virtuous muni! My brother, Mahendradamana, is a mighty ruler. Even Indra was subdued in battle by his prowess. This lad," she pointed at Pradyumna, "has delicate limbs, and has not even attained full youth. What good is he, if the demon-chief finds out?"

"Listen, O fawn-eyed one," said Narada, "Do not have any apprehensions on account of your brother, Mahendradamana. Know that the invincible demon *Kalashambara* was struck down in battle by this boy. He alone will kill Mahendradamana. A tremendous battle will take place in the morning, fair lady. Your father-in-law will undoubtedly come on Garuda here tomorrow morning to help Pradyumna. O passionate beauty! Once Pradyumna kills that Mahendradamana, who is a thorn in the side for the Gods, a marriage between him and Chandravati will also be performed. When you go to Dvaraka with this husband, O doe-eyed one, you will enjoy different delights, which are even hard to come by for Gods."

"O Narada," spoke Prabhavati again, "What is the sense of that happy married life, if my brother is to be killed by my husband? My name will be disgraced in all the worlds, for having had my brother killed for my husband's sake. Therefore, O Narada, I do not really want this husband under these circumstances, excellent though he may be. I am too afraid of infamy. Let him go back home, muni."

Narada turned to the worried princess, and patiently explained to her, "O lovely-skinned beauty, there is no reason to despair. A good woman wishes to have a better family from her husband than her own father's clan. What is to happen must happen. It's useless to resist it. For that reason, the wise do not lament in this way, O doe-eyed one. Now listen, my fair-skinned beauty, Pradyumna is really going to be your husband. This, my lotus-eyed lady, has been preordained by the Creator, that the demon Mahendradamana is to be killed by Pradyumna, by whatever means are necessary. Now that you know this, my curvaceous, passionate beauty, leave your worries behind. I am continuing on now to Mrigendrashikhara, and will return to you in the morning." Having said this, Narada went on his way to relate everything to King Suryaketu.

As soon as the great muni had gone, the lady offered her seat to Pradyumna. She felt too shy to utter a word, and so Pradyumna spoke respectfully to her, as she bashfully turned her face down. "I have heard about the treasures of your beauty from Narada's mouth, and since then, my mind has become completely taken over by the thought of you. I can never sleep." Speaking words like these, Krishna's child



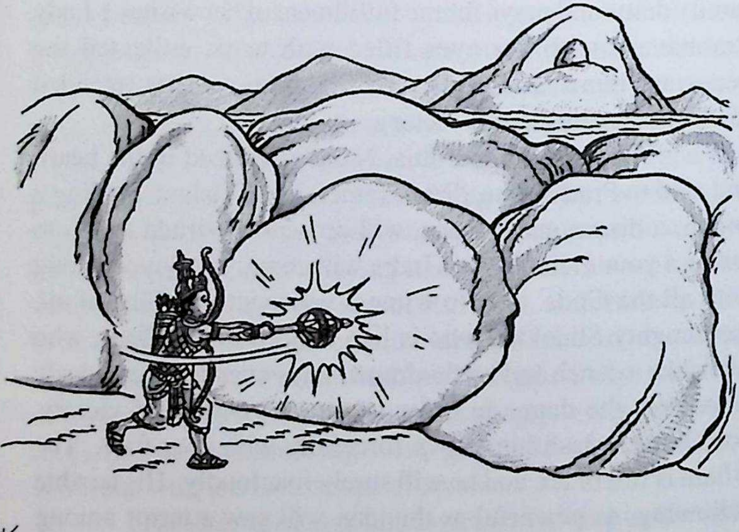
took Prabhavati for his own in a Gandharva style marriage. Then Pradyumna put princess Prabhavati upon his lap, and said to her, "Look at the lovely full moon coming out, causing delight to the eyes, enrapturing the people. Your face is similar to it, beloved. The multitudes of lotuses are closing down. Having left the lotus petals, a bee advances towards the blooming night lilies. O beloved! See how the pollen-covered petal of the lily is pressed down by the legs of a bumble bee. It looks like the kissed lips of an amorous woman at the end of sexual union. Look how the trees, from their cupped palms of most delicate leaves, tremulous, agitated by the gentle breeze, cast down their flowers, O beloved! Your face is a garden, full of smiles like blossoming flowers, where your bright lips are the petals, and your eyebrows move to and fro like dancing creepers." Having murmured all this with sweet words to his beloved, the son of Rukmini, and the inciter of love, dallied with her on that delightful and excellent mountain. Then Prabhavati, swirling artfully with the movements of love, resembled a pulsating pond, golden with lotus-pollen, shimmering with garlands of waves, and sonorous with the love songs of swans.

Just when the foam-like moon was setting in the west, Pradyumna saw that Narada had arrived. He immediately called out to the muni, "O divine sage, how am I, of little strength, and quite clearly still a child, to conquer Mahendradamana, the invincible demon-king?" Narada said in reply, "O strong-armed one, according to Brahma's own words, you will defeat this most invincible demon-king. It is only because of Brahma's words that the wicked Mahendradamana has been able to conquer the three worlds, though they are protected by the world-guardians. So, in accordance with Brahma's words, Mahendradamana may be unconquerable for the Gods, but he is not invincible to you, who are but a callow youth."

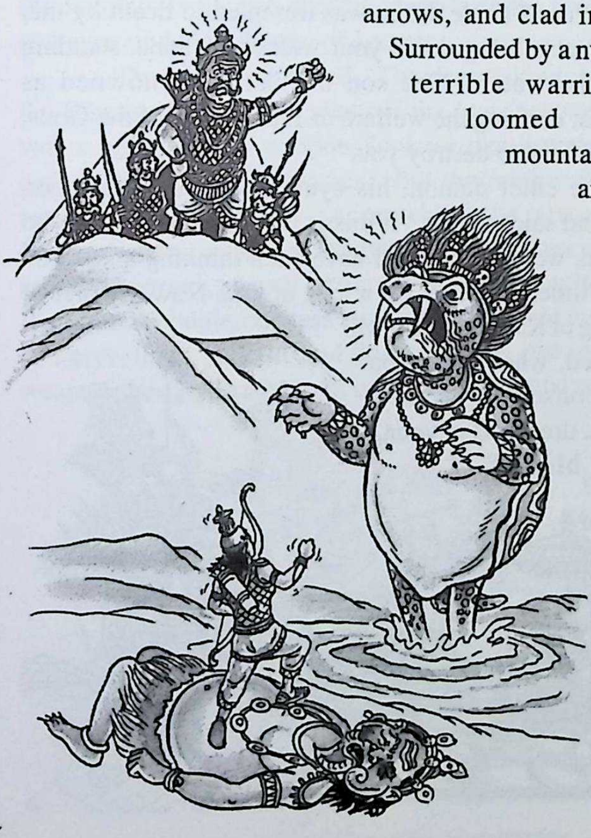
Upon hearing this, Pradyumna, the young incarnation of the glorious God of Love, was thrilled to his heart. His hair stood on end from sheer elation, as he said to his beloved, "O lotus-faced one, you have just heard the words of the great rishi. O lady, please get ready the auspicious articles ensuring in every way my victory in battle." (A lamp, incense, vermillion powder, flowers, and unbroken rice are placed on a tray. It is customary that a wife performs arati, gives tika to her husband, and expresses her good wishes for him. Then she places the tray with the offerings near the altar of the family deity, and prays for the fulfillment of her wishes.) Lady Prabhavati, with her eyes filled with tears, collected the necessary items, and performed the religious rites intended to ensure her husband's victory.

When he saw all this, Narada rejoiced in his heart, and said to Pradyumna, "Your father, Lord Vishnu, holding a conch, a discus and a mace, will arrive on Garuda today, to witness your victory. And Indra will come, overjoyed, along with all the Gods, only to witness your victory. First of all, the haughty Shankha, who is like a thorn to the Gods, who roars like a conch and kettle-drums, stays over there, zealously protecting the dam. In order to assure yourself of victory, you should quash him down forcefully with your foot. The villain is full of air, and he will surely roar loudly. His terrible bellowing, as powerful as thunder, will sow a terror among the wicked demons. Once you kill the evil Mahendra-damana, who is so proud of his strength, along with his younger brother, you will have fulfilled the heart's desire of Indra, Himself."

After having told him this, the muni quickly gave Pradyumna a proper blessing for victory. Pradyumna then set off for the lovely mountain which was Shankha's abode. He stood there at the mouth of Shankha's cave, gave a loud shout, and then started tearing down the dam. Then Shankha, so proud of his strength, came out of his cave and, with his eyes lit up by his fangs, spoke these terrifying words, "O cruel one, on whose orders are you breaking the dam which I am protecting with my prowess, and which even the gods dare not approach?" Then, the demon with a glowing red eyes and a reddened face suddenly slapped Pradyumna. Pradyumna fell down, which made him very annoyed, but then he got up and fell into arm-to-arm combat with Shankha, and being the finest of the mighty, Pradyumna felled him to the ground. He then stomped on the demon, and with his foot kicked so hard his belly full of air, that Shankha trumpeting like the very conch of Vishnu, soon expired.

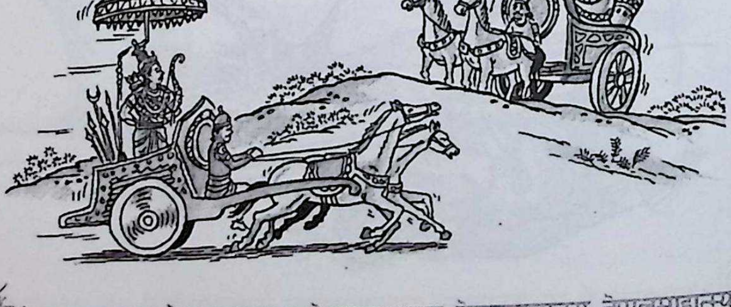


Shankha's terrible roar awakened the tortoise-demon, Kacchapa, also known as Viradha (the reviled one). He came out of the water, roaring greatly with fear. Pradyumna saw the demon sticking out of the water. His body was like a mountain with a huge mouth and round eyes. He was making a terrible noise, like a storm-cloud. Mahendradamana felt the cave he was in shaking with Shankha's bellowing and Viradha's roar, and he began to wonder why there was suddenly all this confusion. He began to suspect some danger lurking caused by his enemies because of what appeared to be fearsome omens, so he suddenly burst out of his lair, holding a sword, a bow with arrows, and clad in armor. Surrounded by a number of terrible warriors, he loomed like a mountain peak, and shone like a lapis



stone split open. Nearly swooning with rage, he shouted, "What fool, unaware of my might, dares to attack my younger brother, Viradha?" When he saw the most famous and foremost of the demons come angrily out of his cave and stand there, Pradyumna left the tortoise shaped Viradha, and having mounted a chariot, faced the demon king. Seeing Pradyumna in front of him, ready for a fight, the notorious demon spoke even more harshly, "On whose command are you attacking my Kacchapa, you nasty brat, and whose child are you, anyway. I want to know! Speak!" Having listened to the mighty demon king's verbal assault, the valiant Pradyumna answered him softly, "Shankha, who was bawling like a conch and kettle drum, was trampled to death by me, and I shall also bring down your wicked Viradha, standing there in the water. The son of Vishnu, renowned as Pradyumna, desiring the welfare of Indra, King of the Gods, has arrived here to destroy you."

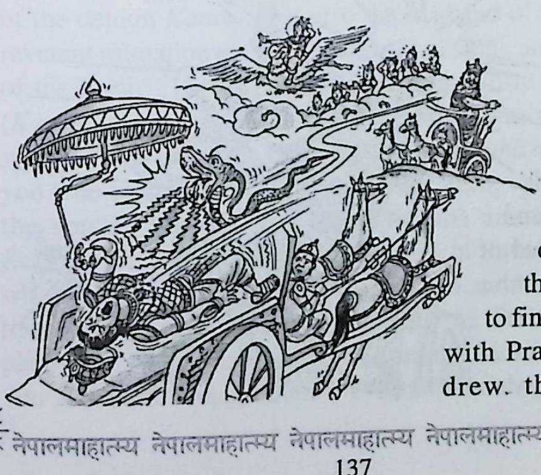
The chief demon, his eyes reddened with anger, laughed, and said cruelly, "If this is you, *Keshava's* son who has arrived, well and good. I have been thinking about you for a long time. Finally I get a look at you. Now my rage at your killing of Kalashambara will be assuaged, when I see you lying unconscious on the battlefield, drenched in your flowing blood."



Saying this, the most famous and foremost of demons bit his lower lip, and rained a flood-like shower of arrows on Pradyumna.

The incensed mighty Pradyumna, exultant like the rising sun, replied immediately, "Once I kill you, a great villain and a thorn in Indra's side, I will be able to marry Chandravati without any hindrance." Having said this, Pradyumna took in hand the *Gandiva* bow and, drawing it almost into a circle, he suddenly released an arrow adorned with golden feathers. At that very moment during the happy occasion of the dreadful battle that was going on, Shri Krishna, holding a conch, a discus and a mace, arrived swiftly on Garuda. To honor Pradyumna, Indra also arrived, along with the jubilant gods, and surrounded by flocks of apsaras.

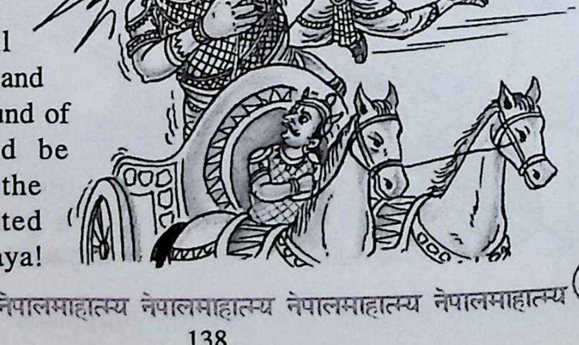
The battle continued. The demon king, frenzied by the flames of his anger, shot off the 'cat-face weapon'. It was a most terrible weapon, looking like a meteor with a cat's face wreathed in flames. But the mighty Pradyumna repelled the missile. After that, the strong-armed Mahendradamana shot at Pradyumna two vulture and heron-mouthed arrows, as well as a crow and owl-mouthed arrows. Pradyumna countered these also with arrows having the faces of tigers, lions, jackals, and dogs. One by one, each major weapon fired by Pradyumna instantly killed one of the great demon warriors. When Mahendradamana noticed how his troops had dwindled, thinking it best to finally dispatch with Pradyumna, he drew the dreaded

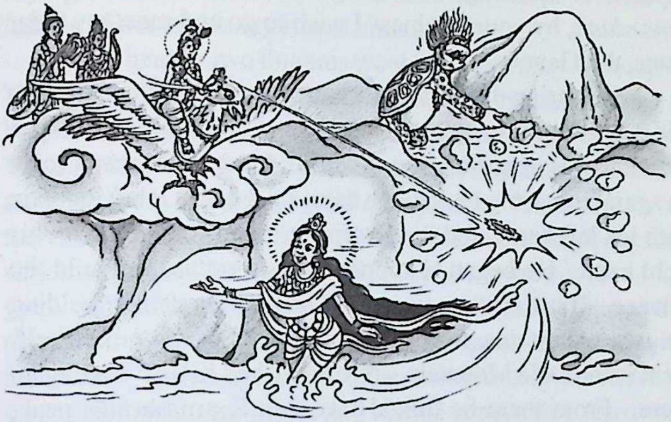


'serpent-weapon', and angrily released that terrifying missile, which burned the sky with poisonous fires. Seeing the 'serpent weapon' spreading its tail of toxic flames fall on Pradyumna, the gods apprehensively shouted "Ha! Ha!" Pradyumna was burned by the weapon. He fell down in shock, and then lost consciousness. He was revived by Garuda, who fanned the fallen hero with his wings. The 'serpent-weapon', which is so hard to beat, was finally brought down by the pounding of Garuda's wings. It fell to the ground like a cut tree.

In the middle of this great battle, the illustrious muni Narada came up to Pradyumna, and said to him, "Listen to my stratagem for killing this demon. Don't be perturbed. You may not be able to kill the chief demon by using a weapon of war. Remember what Brahma said, and having in mind that you are the brave son of Vishnu, raise your fist and hit him quickly on the forehead with all your might." Upon hearing this, Pradyumna quickly ran forward, and struck the demon hard on the head with his fist. The demon king, vomiting a stream of blood from his mouth and out of his eyes, immediately fell down shaking the earth. Once Indra's tormentor was killed, all the inhabitants of Suprabha fled out of the fear of Pradyumna to the beautiful lower world of *Patala*.

When the demon king was slain, wonderful flowers of different colors fell from the sky, and the sweet sound of drums could be heard. All the gods shouted with joy, "Jaya!





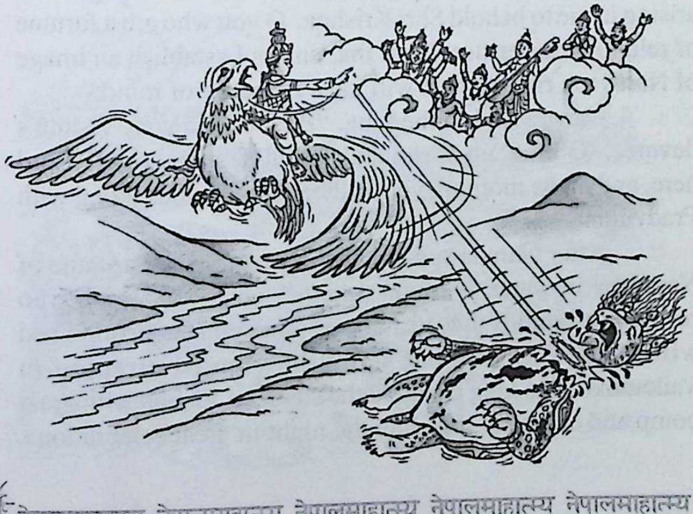
Jaya!" (Victory!). When the great demon was killed by Krishna's son, the choicest of rivers, the Vagmati, assumed the shape of a woman, and came to Krishna. She prayed to him in this way, "Obeisance be to you, O victorious Vishnu, Ruler of the Senses, with a discus in Your hand, four-armed One, younger brother of Indra (in the Veda), and the son of Devaki, of excellent fame. The One having long hair, who is the Lord of Rukmini, who is known as *Madhava*, and as *Madhusudana*, and the husband of *Satyabhama* are you, O resident of Dvaraka, most beloved One. You were the enemy of the demon *Kamsa*, and also the husband of Rukmini. A reverent salutation to the husband of Lakshmi, and to the Lord of the Earth! Having assumed the huge form of a tortoise (*Kurma avatara*), the Mandara Mountain was supported by you. Having taken the body of a boar (*Varaha avatara*), it is you who carried the Earth, and protected it. You, indeed as the son of *Bhargava* (*Parashurama*) are the killer of *Kartavirya*. You alone are also the killer of Ravana (as *Rama*), who was born in the clan of Raghu. You are the Protector of those yearning for protection, and the Bestower of all pleasures. Being the Cause of the permanence of the worlds, you alone can change them. O *Hrishikesha*, you are quite capable of splitting the barrage built by the demons. O *Janardana*, by your kindness I wish to go and meet my elder sister, the Ganga."

Hearing the Vagmati's words, Lord Krishna, his eyes wide with rapture, split the barrage with his discus. When the dam was smashed, the dreadful demon Kacchapa leapt up again, and seing the broken dam, seized the Dola Mountain with his left hand, and the Svarnashringa Mountain with his right hand. He began to topple them in order to rebuild the barrage. But Krishna, as soon as he saw the demon holding the two mountains, faster than the speed of the mind itself, went to the Dola Mountain, and established Kileshvara lingam there. From there he quickly went to Svarnashringa peak, and established Svarnashringeshvara lingam there. Then he came back to where Kacchapa was.

In this way these two lingams were established by Krishna, himself. It is said that those men on earth who become the devotees of these two lingams, will attain their heart's desires, without any doubt. On the fourteenth day of the dark moon in Chaitra (Jan./Feb.), those people who worship the unsurpassed Kileshvara will certainly become inhabitants of Kailasha. On the fourteenth day of the dark half of the month of Magha (Mar./Apr.), on Shivaratri, in the proximity of Svarnashringeshvara, those who light a circle of lights around the lingam, will have no fear of obstacles caused by Saturn. He who beholds with devotion the God Svarnashringeshvara, and the God called Kileshvara, will be successful, undoubtedly. Even those who listen with devotion to this story of the arising of Svarnashringeshvara and, similarly, the appearance of Kilesha, will have their sins destroyed. Those inclined towards scholarship will become learned. Warriors will be victorious. Farmers and merchants will become endowed with wealth, and others will get their wishes. A student gets knowledge, a seeker of wealth gets riches, a pregnant woman will give birth to a son, and one desirous of liberation will attain release. What is the use of saying more? Whatever a man asks for, those wishes he fulfills. There is no argument about it.

When the two lingams were established by the mighty Vishnu, the foundations of both mountains extended down to Patala, and the tortoise-demon was unable to uproot them. Viradha then wrestled with the mighty Pradyumna. Narada ran up to Pradyumna again, and said quickly, "You must throw the wicked Viradha on his back, and snatch the magical gems which are embedded on his belly." Hearing the advice of the great rishi, the quick-footed Pradyumna forcibly flipped the demon on his back, and removed all the gems he found with his sword. The enraged Kacchapa, immediately turned over on his stomach once more, and roared repeatedly, terrifying Pradyumna.

When Narada saw that the tortoise-demon had still not expired, he again ran up to Pradyumna and said, "Because of the preponderance of Shiva's grace on these valliant warriors, and their being in contact with holy Vagmati water, they cannot be slain here. Therefore you must pull him out of the water with the help of Garuda's powerful wings, and then cut off his head with the discus." Upon hearing this, the valiant Garuda immediately pulled



Kacchapa out of the water onto firm ground. With the demon splayed on the ground, glistening like the morning sun, Pradyumna severed his head with the discus. The demon's huge head slowly tumbled on the ground.

When they saw Viradha killed, the joyous gods, with their eyes wide with wonder rained flowers on Pradyumna, who looked very handsome in the twilight, colored as he was with the saffron hues of the flower pollen and the red of the setting sun. Then darkness filled the sky, and the moon shone out surrounded by a profusion of rays, as if he had just come from tha celebration. That night Krishna stayed only in Suprabha.

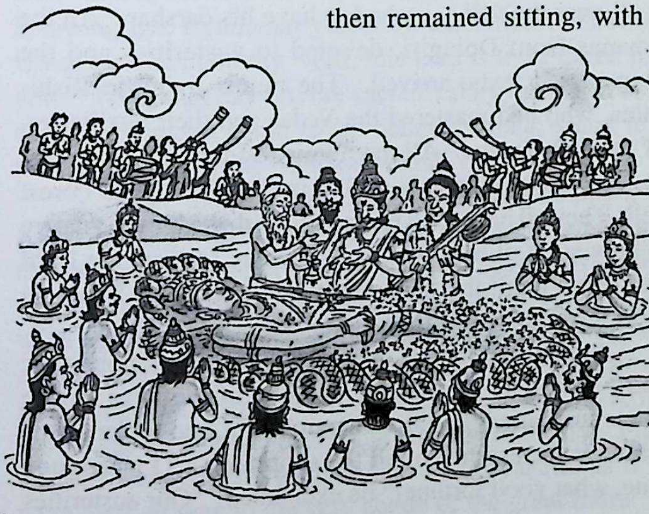
The overjoyed Narada went to Mrigendrashikhara, and related the whole story to King Suryaketu. During the night, King Suryaketu, brimming with delight, went quickly along with his entourage and with Narada, to the highland site of Vishnu's appearance. But there, the most virtuous muni Narada told the ecstatic monarch, "The all-pervading Madhusudana will not come here today. Nevertheless, you and I should both stay here, keeping in our hearts the fervent desire to behold Lord Vishnu." Suryaketu, his voice brimming with emotion, said to the sage, "I feel an overwhelming desire arising in me to behold Shri Krishna. O you who are a fortune of religious austerities, I feel that unless I establish an image of Narayana right here, I will have no peace of mind."

Narada said to the king, "Blessed are you, Vishnu's devotee. O king, go ahead and install a statue of the Lord here, and in the morning you will behold Govinda along with Pradyumna."

After Narada spoke, the king established a statue of Narayana in water, lying on *Ananta's* coils. A person who reverently beholds that Vishnu reclining on a serpentine bed will please Vishnu, and surely be granted a repose in Vaikuntha. The king installed the statue of Vishnu with great pomp and expense, spending the night in great celebration.

Then, in the clear morning, King Suryaketu accompanied by the muni went to where Krishna was staying. When he beheld the Lord of the World, the king's hair stood up in awe, and he prostrated like a stick on the ground. Suryaketu prayed, "Obeisance to you, O son of Devaki, obeisance to you, O slayer of *Madhu*! Let obeisance be to you, O Lord of the senses, O *Kaitabha's* foe, let obeisance be to you! Obeisance to you, O mighty Lord Vishnu, O killer of *Kamsa*! Protect me, you who lie on *Shesha,* O Ruler of the World, let obeisance be to you! O foe of *Mura,* let obeisance be to you, let obeisance be to you, O *Vamana*! Let obeisance be to you, O Ramachandra, let obeisance be to you, to Shri Krishna! Obeisance to you, O husband of Lakshmi, obeisance to you, Preserver of the Earth! A reverent salutation to the lotus-eyed One, a reverent salutation to the One with a lotus growing from his navel! A reverent salutation to the One who had the form of a boar, and to the One who had the form of a tortoise, a reverent salute! A reverent salutation to you, O Support of the World, a salutation to you, to the man-lion!"

Having lauded him so, Suryaketu then placed both of Shri Krishna's feet on his head, and then remained sitting, with his



hands reverently joined in devotion. Shri Krishna acknowledged Suryaketu as his devotee, and said, "Rise, King Suryaketu! You are my true devotee in every way. Ask for the boon that you have on your mind, blessed one." "Govinda," replied Suryaketu, "if you are pleased, do come with me to Mrigendrashikhara for my important task at hand. I am to present in marriage my beautiful daughter, Chandravati, to Pradyumna. After you partake in that ceremony, may it please you to go back to Dvaraka." "So be it," Krishna consented.

Then Shri Krishna along with everybody went near Lord Pashupati, took a ritual bath in the waters of the Vagmati, duly performed the morning sandhya prayers, and offered libations of water to the Progenitors. He then went and beheld Goddess Vatsala. After that, the Lord went to pay obeisance to Pashupati. Having reverently beheld Lord Pashupati, and having worshipped Him in the prescribed manner, the Lord performed a circumambulation, arriving at the southern gate. Seated there, he engaged in japa with concentration.

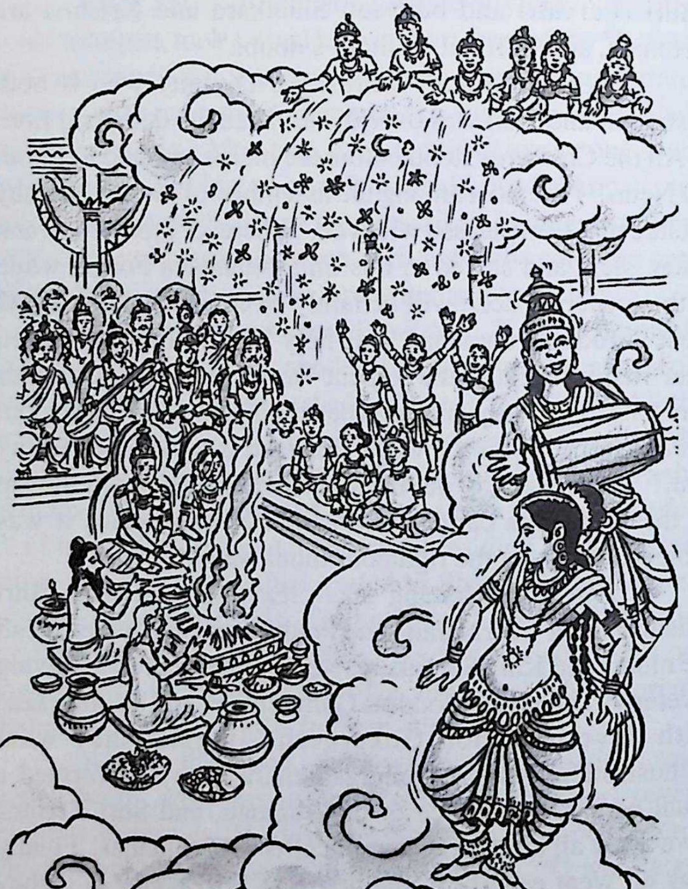
When the word spread that Shri Krishna Himself, had come to the sacred abode of Pashupati, the good folk from all over the valley rushed to have his darshan. All the brahmanas from Dolagiri, devoted to austerities and the reciting sacred texts, arrived. The munis living in Rishi-ashrama, who had mastered the Vedas and their auxiliaries, all of them also came. All the munis residing at Vagishvara came, and the other munis settled in Shleshmantaka Forest as well. They all hurried to Pashupati, with the burning desire for a holy sight of Shri Krishna. As they arrived, the Lord bowed down to all the munis over and over. The Supreme God presented many gifts to them, also.

Among the munis, there was a very illustrious sage named Nemi, who was truly a treasure of the most severe religious austerities. He raised his right arm, and spoke words which were the essence of all the scriptures. "O what good fortune, what good fortune!" he exclaimed. "Our austerities have certainly borne fruit, since we can see in one place, both Gods - Hari (Vishnu), and Hara (Shiva)! We are very fortunate, having attained our goal, since with our physical eyes do we behold in bodily form both Shiva and Vishnu, who are both the primordial persons. For he who sees Vishnu through Shiva's form, and Shiva in Vishnu's form, is truly called a Vaishnavite, as well as a Shaivite. Only the vilest of men create differences between Hari and Hara. They are nothing but heretics, contrary to the Vedas, and will surely go to hell! Those who find no difference between Ganga and Gauri (Parvati) and between Shankara and Krishna are fortunate, and fulfilled, without a doubt."

Hearing Nemi's words, the Divinity who is both Pashupati and Hari was overjoyed. Then the delighted Lord of All the Creatures stood before the munis and said to Nemi, "O Nemi! Foremost among the assembly of munis, I hereby declare that I am pleased with you. Wherever I roamed, drank water, slept and stayed in this Shleshmantaka Forest, while in the form of a deer, will certainly be considered a tirtha, O most virtuous brahmana. This holy land will also be called after *Vasuki,* because the serpent Vasuki practiced austerities here long ago. Nemi, may you be the chief muni of this region. Great ascetic, upon my word, this land is to be cared for by you." From that day on, the sacred valley resting in the lap of the Himalaya came to be called Nepala, since it was protected (pal) by the righteous muni Nemi.

After that, having taken leave of Pashupati, Shri Krishna along with Narada and Pradyumna, and joined by all the munis and King Suryaketu, went to Guhyeshvari. Having reverently beheld the Goddess Guhyeshvari, and having gazed with devotion upon Gokarnesha lingam, they went enthusiastically to Mrigendrashikhara. They performed a ritual bath in the source of the Vagmati, and Shri Krishna gave away all kinds of charitable gifts to brahmanas. Finally they all went eagerly to the house of Suryaketu, as if they were on their way to the very abode of the great Indra.

There, the blessed Suryaketu, assisted by Narada, gave his beautiful daughter Chandravati to Pradyumna in the traditional manner. The gods sounded drums, and a veritable showers of flowers rained. Suryaketu honored the Supreme God Krishna, along with his son, with garlands and garments of many colors, and similarly, with different kinds of brilliant ornaments. A flock of apsaras danced, enchanting everyone with the tinkling sound of their anklets. The gandharvas sang songs beautifully, and the kinnaras played on their instruments with joy. A holy breeze carrying a sacred smell blew softly.



As Krishna looked, with his mind abloom with wonder, at the bride Chandravati, gleaming like another moon-beam, he was deeply satisfied. And Princess Chandravati, also, decorated with special ornaments, shone in the proximity of Pradyumna, like the Goddess of Royal Fortune, Rajalakshmi. The blessed King Suryaketu exulted, having obtained Pradyumna, the foremost among the mighty, as his son-in-law.

Then Lord Krishna, with a conch, a discus, and a mace in the hands, mounted upon Garuda. His limbs were anointed with yellow sandalwood paste, and he shone like a blue sapphire. As the Lord was being worshipped by the gods and gandharvas, he was so delighted by the munis, sonorously reciting the Vedas, that the hair on his body stood up on end.

At Shri Krishna's command, Pradyumna made lady Chandravati and princess Prabhavati get into his own chariot, which was capable of going anywhere by merely wishing it. Then Pradyumna, himself, entered that superb heavenly chariot made of gold, filled with heaps of gems, and with the two jewels of womankind in it. On Krishna's command, Suryaketu with his family climbed into the heavenly chariot. He was like Kubera, the divine bestower of treasures, in the fabled *Pushpaka*. It flew through the sky, shining like a blue sapphire, carrying along also the muni Narada, and Pradyumna who was brimming with joy. Shri Krishna on Garuda flew at their side.

The delighted Lord Vishnu surveyed the incomparable holy land below, with the lovely Vagmati winding through it, and said to everyone, "Look at the southern side of Mrigashringa Mountain, at the holy bank of the Chandradipti river. It will become a sacred place of mine. That is the place where I always dwell with a human body and a lion's face. People will always worship me there with great devotion. There, too, on the auspicious bank of the Shakra river, after having established Indreshvara lingam, Indra performed a beautiful sacrifice.

"My lovely abode will always be at the top of Dolashikhara. It will be praised on earth as the foremost of mountain tops. The people will worship my form, so beautifully manifest there, O Pradyumna. There are numerous brahmanas proficient at scriptural recitation at Dolashikara. One is always close to me there, especially at the time of the evening rituals.

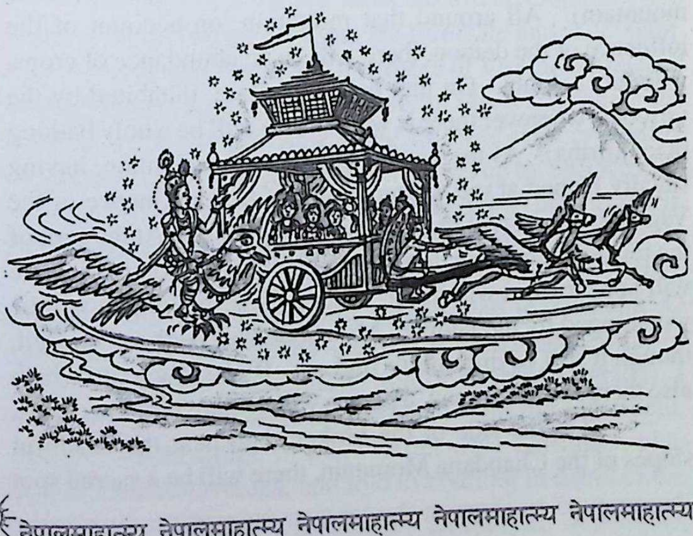
"Look at Karkotaka Lake, at the beautiful foot of the Sarvaushadhi Mountain, where great nagas led by their king, Karkotaka, frolic.

"It is enough just to declare 'I will go to the confluence of the Vagmati and Manimati, which is venerated by the people,' to completely destroy one's sins. As many steps as a man takes on the river bed in the Manimati's confluence, for so many hundreds of years will he, devoted to Shiva, live happily in heaven. One who always takes a ritual bath at the place of the commingling of the Vagmati and the Manimati, revered by the people, is called virtuous. There is a stream that appears near there called Rudra-dhara, which was created by the God of Gods (Shiva) out of compassion for the people. Endowed with the supernatural power of Shiva, it gives worldly enjoyment and liberation. Having reverently beheld the source of Rudradhara, one is released from all sins. A ritual bath in the confluence of the Manimati is regarded to be ten times more effective than a bath at *Gaya*, *Naimisha*, or even at *Pushkara*, or *Kurukshetra*.

"O Narada, look at the beautiful confluence of the Vira and Bhadra rivers, where *Hanuman* himself, long ago installed a lingam. A man who takes a ritual bath in the prescribed manner at the Viravatarana (where the brave one [Hanuman] descended) Tirtha, at the confluence of the Vira and Bhadra rivers, will go to the realm of the brave. The story of the *Ramayana* was authored here by Valmiki, long ago.

"There is a tirtha which issues at the confluence of the Champa river, called Tilamadhava Tirtha by the munis, which is a destroyer of all sins.

"Look at the Manohara river, with its charming waters, swarming with swans and ducks, and adorned with ruddy geese. The land between the Manohara and the Vagmati is renowned as 'the land of dharma' (dharma bhumi), for it always makes righteousness flourish. Look at the foremost of rivers, Vagmati, with its holy water, which originated from the mouth of Shiva. It is the annihilator of great sins. The Vagmati is the greatest of rivers. Wherever a person takes a plunge in it, may they reap the rewards of having performed the vajapeya and ashvamedha sacrifices. Look at the lovely confluence of the Manohara and the Vagmati. By taking a ritual bath there, a man goes to the realm of Brahma. Now look at the beautiful Vishnumati river, whitened by foamy waves where, by taking a holy bath, a man will behold the realm of Vishnu. The land between the Vagmati and Vishnumati is truly called 'the land of spiritual attainment' (siddhi-bhumi). Sin cannot last there.



"He who takes his ritual bath in the confluence of the Rudramati at the foot of *Pulaha* muni's ashrama, pleases Aryama (bosom-friend of the world, the Sun) and ultimately goes to the realm of the Sun.

"Look at Lord Tankeshvara (lingam) at the holy bathing place on the shore of the Vishnumati. The confluence of the Vagmati and the Vishnumati is a bestower of great religious merit. It is a famous place, O Pradyumna, called Pancha-linga Tirtha, where there are five lingams. O son, sin never remains in the man who performs a ritual bath at that confluence called Pancha-linga Tirtha. Here at the beautiful confluence of the Vagmati and the Vishnumati, long ago, Sati's knee fell, when Vishnu, for Shiva's sake, cut up her dead body. Those who perform japa at this *pitha*, are very successful, have no doubt.

In a cave on the south side of the Sarvaushadhi Mountain, there will be an abode of mine, O Pradyumna. It will be kept secret by the influence of the guardian of the region, and it will be both inaccessible, but easy also for some people to reach.

"Look at that tortoise-demon killed by your own hand. People will call it from now on Kurmagiri, (tortoise mountain). All around that mountain, on account of the influence of the demon, there will be an abundance of crops, without a doubt. On that holy mountain, inhabited by the virtuous, wherever there is water, there will be a holy bathing place (tirtha). At the foot of this tortoise mountain, having ritually bathed at the western bank of the confluence of the Vagmati, a man will have his wishes fulfilled. At the foot of the tortoise-mountain, towards the west of the Vagmati, there will appear from within the water a Ganesha, which will be worshipped by the people. My abode will be there, as well, though it will be difficult to find out. By having a ritual bath also there in the Vagmati, a person will acquire religious merit.

"On the side of the broken dam near the beautiful slopes of the Chandana Mountain, there will be a sacred spot of mine renowned as a Vishnu tirtha, where I appeared before in the holy Minachakra Lake. By merely taking a holy dip there, on the twelfth day of a lunar month, one becomes exalted in my realm (Vaikuntha). The merit of giving charitable donations in this place of mine, be it to devoted wives, or to brahmanas well versed in the Vedas, is said to be imperishable.

"Look at the tirtha which bestows the object of one's desire, at the foot of the Chandana Mountain. Here, O son, the Great Goddess, Herself, crushed sandalwood paste.

"Now, the palace of Suprabha, shining with the light of many gems, has been destroyed, and all the demons who were not killed, have fled from there to the lower world."

Having said this, Lord Vishnu, worshipped by the gods, descended with his entourage from Garuda, at this sacred place which is so hard to reach.

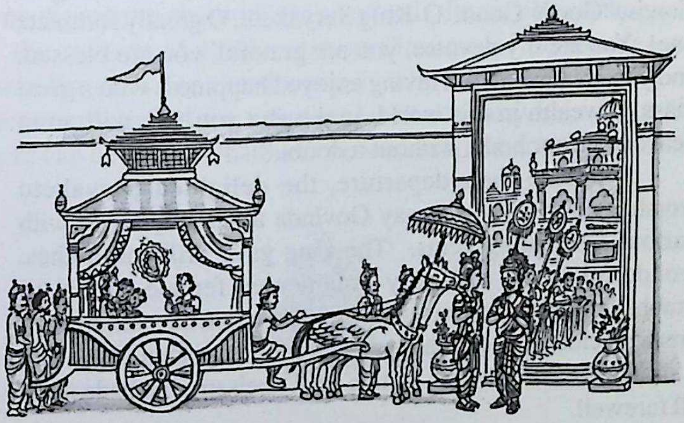
Then Govinda, very pleased, along with his son, and accompanied by the muni Narada, established the excellent lingam, Gopaleshvara. And Pradyumna, who was also very pleased, full of devotion to his father, carefully established a statue called Shiva-Narayana. Without a doubt, those people who reverently behold the most excellent Gopaleshvara lingam established by Krishna, are fortunate and successful. Those who reverently behold the image of Vishnu established by Pradyumna, having lived happily in this world, attain the supreme state. In the Kali yuga, to those who reverently behold the lingam called Gopaleshvara, set up by Shri Krishna himself in the sacred land of Nepal which is so hard to reach, Shri Krishna, being pleased, grants the realm of Vishnu.

Having established the lingam, Govinda said to Narada, "Go once more with great speed to Dvaraka, O brahmana. Tell about the victory of Pradyumna soon to *Ugrasena.* In the meantime, O son of Brahma (Narada), I will go to Shvetaka with my son, and reinstate Suryaketu, who has taken refuge in me." After Shri Krishna spoke, Narada went to Dvaraka, and told everything in detail to the king. The king then gave orders to show off the splendor of the city. After that, Rukmini also, having heard about the great victory of her son, summoned all her lady friends. She said excitedly to them, "Having killed the invincible Mahendradamana, that thorn to the Gods, my son Pradyumna, is coming here, bringing with him Prabhavati, the lovely sister of the demon, and Chandravati, the auspicious and delightful daughter of King Suryaketu. Since I am going to see Pradyumna, who is returning from the jaws of death, for this occasion I request everyone to engage themselves in auspicious activities." Then, at the command of Rukmini, they arranged an auspicious welcoming ceremony for Pradyumna. Some lotus-eyed ladies stood grasping ceremonial pitchers full of water, some were holding sacred plants or votive lights in their hands, and others held incense. There were lovely women, with huge tremulous eyes, standing, wearing colorful clothes and garlands, with red colored jars in their hands. All the inhabitants of Dvaraka, wearing festive clothes and decorations, came out with garlands in their hands, to greet Shri Krishna and His son. The Yadavas all came out, with *Balarama* walking in front, shaking the ground with the noise of assorted musical instruments. All of them stood at the city gate, yearning for Krishna's arrival.

While all of this commotion was taking place in Dvaraka, Krishna went immediately, with Suryaketu, Pradyumna and others, to the beautiful city of Shvetaka. When they alighted at the city gate, King Hamsadhvaja was informed that Shri Krishna had arrived with his entourage. The king responded to this news by coming to the city gate carrying the materials of worship in a tray, in order to greet them respectfully. After the king had worshipped Shri Krishna as the custom dictated, he joined his hands together in supplication, and said, "O Govinda, my life is fulfilled from the sight of you. Please enter this city immediately, and make my home purified. I am your slave, O Govinda! Have mercy, O treasury of compassion! Please rest here today, before continuing to Dvaraka in the morning. O Govinda, with Your blessings the demon Mahendradamana, who could not be defeated even by Indra, has been killed by Pradyumna. Hence, this Suryaketu, whose relation Krishna has become, is blessed. And so are Princess Prabhavati, and Princess Chandravati. Let them immediately enter the inner chambers of my palace in the city to accept my hospitality. O Lord Krishna, command me! What can I do for you?"

When He heard these words, Govinda said to the king: "Good! Good! O King Hamsadhvaja, foremost of monarchs. Listen to me for what reason I have come, O lion among kings. This most virtuous man, Suryaketu, is a relation and devotee of mine. His entire kingdom was seized by you, by the strength of arms. O King Hamsadhvaja, hand over that kingdom to him according to my words! No discussions about it. Return the kingdom of Shvetaka to him, and go back to Mithila, O king."

Hamsadhvaja simply replied, "I am blessed. I have accomplished what should be done, my life is fruitful. I offer my wealth, body, and soul, to you, Lord. To Suryaketu, here, I give Shvetaka. O Garuda-bannered One, make my abode purified in every way!"



Then Govinda, very pleased, entered the royal palace of Hamsadhvaja. The long-armed divinity Madhusudana, followed by Suryaketu, was seated on a beautiful golden lion-throne, and was worshipped with various gems, by the munificent king. Hamsadhvaja also ceded Shvetaka to King Suryaketu. After some time, the wise King Hamsadhvaja, who had received the command from Govinda, departed for Mithila, along with his retinue and his royal insignia.

Having received his kingdom back, by the glory of Shri Krishna, Suryaketu deemed himself to be fulfilled. With supreme joy, he worshipped Govinda with a collection of great wealth. Having prostrated himself like unto a stick on the ground, with his hollowed hands joined in supplication, he spoke, "O Govinda, because of your efforts my kingdom, which was most hard to get back, was returned to me, and I have achieved fame most rare. By you, the Lord, we are protected, O Krishna. O Lord, now I fear nothing, not even Yama. O Lord Madhusudana, please take rest in my house today. In the morning, be on your way to the city of Dvaraka, with your kinfolk. O Mighty One, make my head sanctified by the dust of your feet. Always have mercy on your slave, O Madhava, who is ever-affectionate towards His devotees!"

Upon hearing such words from the king, Krishna spoke once more, with a deep voice like the rumbling of clouds, "Good! Good! O King Suryaketu, O greatly fortunate one! You are my devotee, you are grateful, you are blessed, and you are powerful. Having enjoyed happiness with a great mass of wealth in this world, in the end you, Sir, will go to heaven in your body, without a doubt."

Before their departure, the delighted Suryaketu worshipped in a special way Govinda and Pradyumna, with various fascinating gems. The king gave brilliant clothes, wonderful gems, and fully ornamented female slaves, to Prabhavati. The most virtuous king gave to Chandravati very precious clothes and ornaments, ten million golden coins, and a hundred female slaves. With a final obeisance he bade them all farewell.

When Krishna arrived in Dvaraka, after having been lavishly honored by King Suryaketu, the overwhelmed Yadavas greeted him with great fanfare. Then Krishna, the destroyer of the demons' vanity, glowing red from the pollen of coral-flowers cast by the hands of the lovely ladies of the city, entered the beautiful city of Dvaraka with his son.

Whoever would read with zeal daily, this story of the auspicious victory of Pradyumna, will have his enemies destroyed, and will gain victory in battle. A student obtains knowledge, and one desirous of wealth will get it. A person wanting a daughter gets a daughter, one without a son will get a son. A kshatriya who hears the delightful story of the victory of Pradyumna, having all his enemies utterly vanquished, will become a great monarch in this world. A vaishya who hears the auspicious and delightful story of the victory of Pradyumna, will be enriched with wealth and grains, and in the end he will attain the supreme state. If a shudra listens with devotion to the auspicious story of the victory of Pradyumna, having enjoyed happiness in this world, in the end he, also, attains to the supreme state. Having heard the story of the victory of Pradyumna, a pregnant woman will bear a son. And it should especially be heard by a king whose kingdom is lost. He obtains an unobtainable kingdom, there is no discussion about it. He who reads the auspicious story of the victory of Pradyumna at the time of performing shraddha rites for the deceased, will certainly have his ancestors satisfied for a further ten thousand years. What more can be said? Whatever one wishes for, that he obtains.

Location of places mentioned in the story

(in order of appearance)

Mrigendrashikhara
The Shivapuri Mountain in the northeastern part of the Valley.

Chandana Mountain
Chandragiri Mountain on the southwest rim of Kathmandu Valley. It was called Chandanagiri (sandalwood mountain), because it is believed that Parvati used to visit a spot at the foot of the mountain, where she ground sandalwood paste on a stone. This is refereed to later in this story. In Itakhel village, about a ten minute walk off the road to Thankot, there is a lingam called Chandanabharateshvara or Chandanaprabhateshvara, which commemorates this event.

Shonita
This city was also supposed to be once on the side of Chandana Mountain.

Rudradhara
The source of the Dhobi Khola, rising on southwestern slope of Shivapuri Mountain, and joining in the Bagmati near Thapathali.

Mathura
One of the seven holy cities of Bharata, and the birthplace of Shri Krishna. Located in Uttar Pradesh, India.

Mandara Mountain see Chapter 1

Dola Mountain see Chapter 3

Svarnashringeshvara
The locations of Svarnasringa Mountain and Svarnasringeshvara lingam are not known.

Kileshvara (9)
This lingam is found in a small shrine in the courtyard of Changu Narayan temple.

Anantashayana Vishnu (36)
The well-known image of Budha-Nilakantha, north of Kathmandu.

Rishi-ashrama see: Chapter 6

Vagishvara see Chapter 4

Mrigashringa Mountain
This mountain is most probably Shivapuri Mountain, also known as Mrigendrashikhara.

Chandradipti river
This river is unknown, but it probably is, or was, in the vicinity of Budha-Nilakantha, which used to be called Narasimha Tirtha.

Shakra river
An unidentified stream in the vicinity af Dahacok Hill, near Thankot, near the southwestern edge of the Valley.

Indreshvara (II) (32)
The second Indreshvara lingam (See Chapter 4 about the first one) is located on Dahacok Hill near Thankot, at the shrine of Indra Daha (Indra's pool). There, on the northern side of the tank of Indra Daha there are two small shrines with carved figures in them (locally identified as Narayan and Narayani). On the plinth of the first temple (between the two temples) there is a small naturally-formed stone lingam, which is split from top to bottom.

Karkotaka Lake
Taudaha lake in the southwest of the Valley, at the foot of Neupane Dara. It is believed that ever since the Valley was drained by Manjushri (or Krishna), a king of the nagas, Karkotaka, lives in a jeweled palace at the bottom of this lake, along with his queen and entourage.

Sarvaushadhi Mountain
The name means 'full of all medicinal herbs'. This refers to the mountain adjacent to Tau Daha, called Taukhani Dara, or Neupane Dara. We have not been able to ascertain the

location of the Vishnu shrine 'in a cave on the south side of the Sarvaushadhi Mountain', mentioned further on.

Gaya
One of the most sacred cities of Bharata (India). The offering of pindas there to one's ancestors is believed to release them from further births, if they are in heaven, or send them to heaven, if they are in hell. Gaya is situated in modern Bihar, 50 miles south of Patna.

Naimisha Forest
A renowned holy forest of great antiquity, located on the banks of the Gomati river. Many great rishis lived there. All the major Puranas and the Mahabharata were recited for the first time before the gathering of sages in the Naimisha forest. It is identified with the modern day Nimsar, 45 miles northwest of Lucknow.

Pushkara
'Lotus'–A famous and ancient tirtha, sanctified in the Treta Yuga by Brahma, and especially associated with him. It is located in modern Rajasthan, near Ajmer.

Kurukshetra
'The sacred region of King Kuru'–A sacred place of great antiquity, and one of the early centers of Vedic civilization. Kurukshetra was the site of the famous battle between the Pandavas and Kauravas, described in the great epic, the *Mahabharata.* Shri Krishna imparted the sacred knowledge of the Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna at this place. It is located in modern Haryana, 45 miles east of Ambala.

Vira and Bhadra confluence
This is the confluence of the Tabhyakusi Khola and the Chakhu Khola at Hanuman Ghat on the southeastern outskirts of Bhaktapur. It is said that Hanuman rested here when he was bringing back a Himalayan mountain peak needed to build the bridge to Lanka, so that Rama's army could pass over it. Hanuman drank the water from this sacred confluence, and established a lingam (Hanumadishvara) here.

Champa river
This river has probably been covered over by urban construction, but the temple of Tilamadhava still remains in Bhaktapur, to the south of Taumarhi Square.

Rudramati river
The Dhobi Khola, which joins the Bagmati east of the Thapatali bridge.

Tankeshvara
This lingam is housed in a small temple on the bank of the Vishnumati, between Tahacal and Kalimati Chowk. The temple surroundings have been recently renovated and are well kept. The lingam itself is a naturally formed stone lingam.

Panchalinga tirtha
The confluence of the Bagmati and Vishnumati at Teku is called Pancha-linga tirtha because of five lingams existing in the vicinity. The names of these lingams are Kuleshvara, Shaphaleshvara, Pradyumneshvara, Panchalingeshvara, and Panchanadeshvara. Nowadays this area of Kathmandu is famous for the Pachali Bhairav shrine. Pachali may be a corruption of Panchalinga. Of the five lingams we have visited only three, Kuleshvara, Pradyumneshvara, and Panchalingeshvara. Kuleshvara is located on a hill on the right side of the Bishnumati, over the waste reprocessing plant, unfortunately. The other two lingams were found in the maze of streets and warehouses between the Pachali Bhairav temple and the ghats. The location of Panchanadeshvara and Shaphaleshvara are not certain, but they must also be in that area. We have not been able so far to find the location of the pitha where Sati's knee fell.

Kurmagiri
Chobar Hill.

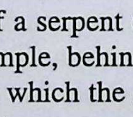
Ganesha
The Jalavinayaka shrine situated just beyond Chobhar Gorge, on the right side of the river. The image of Ganesha here is a large rock with a portion of it in front resembling a tusk. The

Vishnu shrine ('abode of mine') mentioned here, may be a small rock, which is worshipped as Varaha, located in a cavity on the western side (above the Bagmati) of the hill north of the Jalavinayaka temple.

Minachakra Lake
The pond in which the temple of Macche Narayan is situated. It is located in Macche Gaun village, which can be reached (nearly) by road, driving southwest of Kirtipur. From the road, a short walk downhill through the charming Newari village takes one to the shrine of Macche Narayan.

Gopaleshvara (28)
The lingam of Gopaleshvara is in Parphing. Just before the police station, on the right, there's a road which goes down towards the fields. At the bottom of it stands the white domed temple of Gopaleshvara. The lingam is naturally formed of stone.

Shiva-Narayana (29)
Before reaching Parphing, between the villages of Satikhel and Bokhbahal, on the left, there are two ponds with fish in them, and steps leading up to a small single-roofed temple under a cliff. This is the temple of Shesh Narayan, which is the modern name of the shrine of Shiva-Narayana, or Sikha-Narayana, as it is also called. In the shrine there is a large new image of Vishnu, and to the left, a small lingam-shaped stone in which the coils of a serpent (Shesha) can be made out. To the right of the temple, behind a door in the side of the cliff, there is a cave in which the great Buddhist master Padmasambhava meditated.



8

How the Moon Came to the Sacred Valley and Regained His Lustre

There are many lingams in the most holy region of Nepal. Yet there has never been, nor will there ever be, a lingam equal to the Somalingam. In age after age, the sages have been reciting its name. It was called Someshvara in the Krita Yuga, Somanatha in the Treta Yuga, and Somashambhu, in the Dvapara Yuga. In the current Kali age it is called Somalingam. In this age, Somalingam is a mystery, for everybody does not know about it. A person is released from sins merely by listening to the story of its origin.

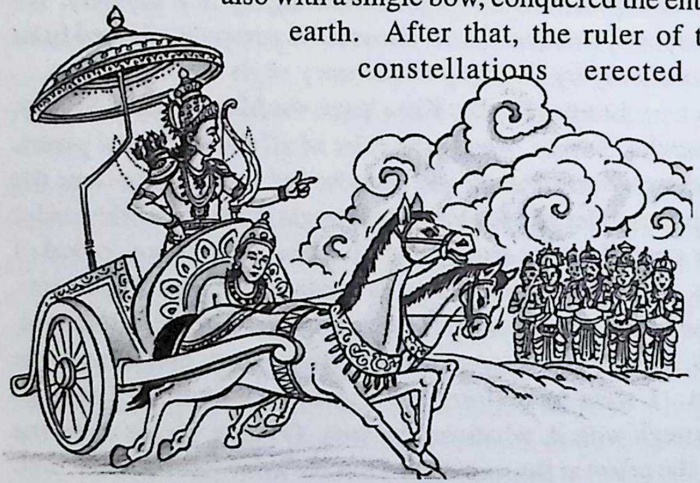
Long ago in the Krita Yuga, the Moon, (See: Glossary, Chandra, Soma), who is the ruler of all the medicinal plants, and well versed in all the branches of learning, became the supreme ruler of creation. He brought the three worlds under his control by the strength of his arms. The Moon, proud of his power, once invited to his palace his guru, Brihaspati. The Moon bowed down to him with great respect, and said, "O Brihaspati, foremost of the twice-born, please hear me out. I want to perform the Rajasuya sacrifice. I will go through with it, whatever the cost. O Guru, please assist me as the priest at the sacrifice. I am but a devotee of yours, who has come to you for shelter."

When he heard his disciple's arrogant request, Brihaspati warned him, "Certainly there is no other sacrifice equal to the Rajasuya. But the Rajasuya sacrifice should not be performed by you, O Lord. There are major obstacles to the performance of that rite. To begin with, the entire earth is to be conquered. The performer of this sacrifice reaps suffering, and the priest fares even worse than that. O Moon, the Rajasuya is a fearsome undertaking, indeed. Therefore, in no case should it be performed by you."

When he heard the Guru's admonition, the Moon respectfully replied, "O Lord, with your help, nothing for me will be impossible to accomplish. O Guru, please do not abandon this because of the labors involved. Please grant me your blessings to complete this sacrifice! A paramount king as myself, surely ought to perform it."

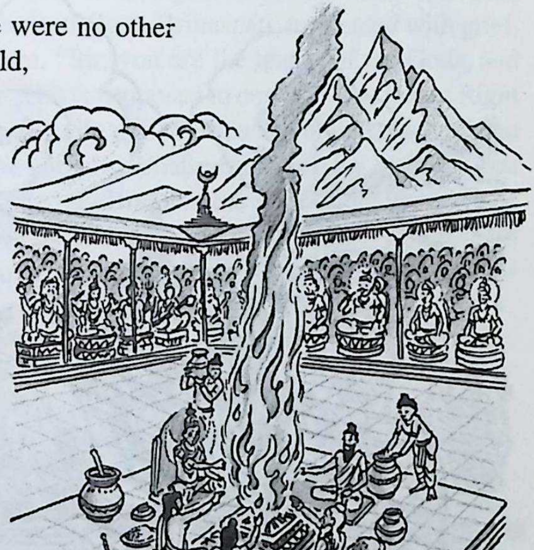
"If such is your unwavering conviction, Moon," Brihaspati replied, "then I will certainly work with you to perform the auspicious Rajasuya sacrifice. But first, conquer the entire earth, and collect its various gems."

Then the Moon, all alone, with only one chariot, and also with a single bow, conquered the entire earth. After that, the ruler of the constellations erected a sacrificial hall near Mt. Meru, and assembled the necessary articles for the ritual. As many vessels as were needed for the ceremony, the Moon had them all made of gold. He assembled heaps of food grains, tremendous like Meru itself. Rivers of different kinds of lentil soups were made to flow, as well as streams of honey, milk, and ghee, and countless small rivers of curds and oil. Sumptuous seats of many colors, covered with deer-wool spreads, were set down, along with a vast number of blankets, all of them seized from different conquered lands by the Moon. The places for sleeping and feasting were constructed from various gems.

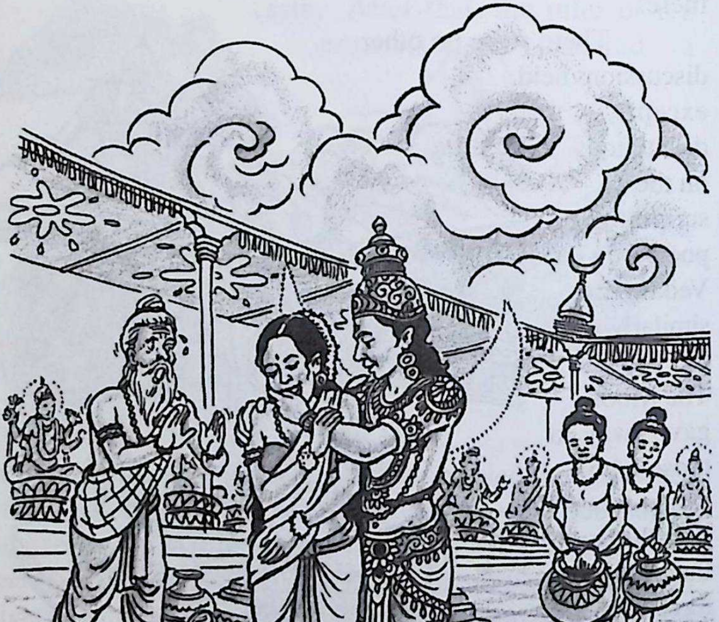


Then Brihaspati consecrated the Moon. All the gods accompanied by their wives, with Shiva at their head, arrived at the beginning of the elaborate sacrifice. The gandharvas, beginning with Haha and Huhu, and the vidyadharas came, together with the apsaras. And all the kings living on the seven island-continents of the world came. All the munis living in different lands, authorities on the Vedas, logicians, also those well versed in the lore of poetry, as well as lexicographers arrived. Also physicians, and astronomers– they all came. Singers, dancers, and also musicians came. Lovely damsels arrived, as well as beggars. "Please give me! Please eat this!", a great din of this nature was heard from there.

There were no other discussions held, except discussions on the scriptures, on poetry, on the Vedas, and similarly, on the Puranas. The Moon gave away to those who came, more wealth than they could have wished for. In this manner he completed the Rajasuya sacrifice. Finally, with golden pitchers

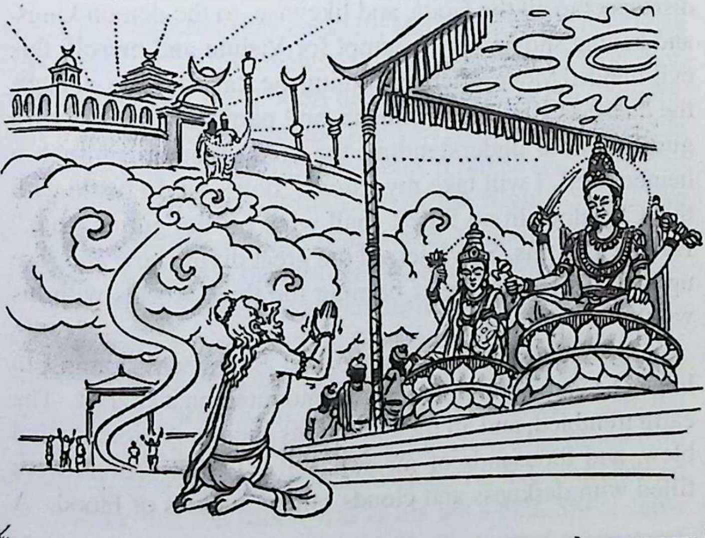


full of water consecrated with various mantras, the Lord of the Heavenly Bodies began the purificatory ablutions following the sacrifice. The Moon bathed amid the sound of mantras from all the four Vedas, the shouts of "Jaya!", and the soft sweet sounds of various musical instruments. At the completion of the ritual bath, the fresh and shining Moon happened to espy the lovely Tara, his guru's wife. Due to the pull of inexorable fate, he was immediately smitten by the arrows of the God of Love. Tara also, having noticed how splendid the Moon was, with his rays so pleasing to the eyes, fell for him with an intense passion. So it is said, that the minds of women are always fickle and unsteady.



Then the Moon grabbed hold of Tara right in front of the guru! When he saw his wife seized before his very eyes, Brihaspati cried out to the brazen interloper, "O Lord of the Night, now that you have completed the Rajasuya rite, are you not afraid of violating morality, especially when you lay hands on the guru's wife? You have abandoned all shame, even in front of the Gods and noble brahmanas, as well." Even while his own guru tried to hold him back with moral exhortations, the Moon entered the inner chambers of the palace with Tara, who was wearing an exquisite necklace. "Oh! Oh!" all the denizens of heaven cried out loudly, in shock and dismay.

While the Moon, expert in the art of love, dallied inside the palace with Tara, Brihaspati, tormented with grief, cried out to Indra, "Sir, you are the leader of the Gods, and you are the one who is supposed to control all of them. Right in front of you, the wife of a priest, and a brahmana, has been abducted by the Moon! What more can I say to you? You have been ordained by Brahma, the guru of the world, to be the chief of the Gods for the protection of heaven. You are saluted by all its creatures. A king, who takes a sixth of his

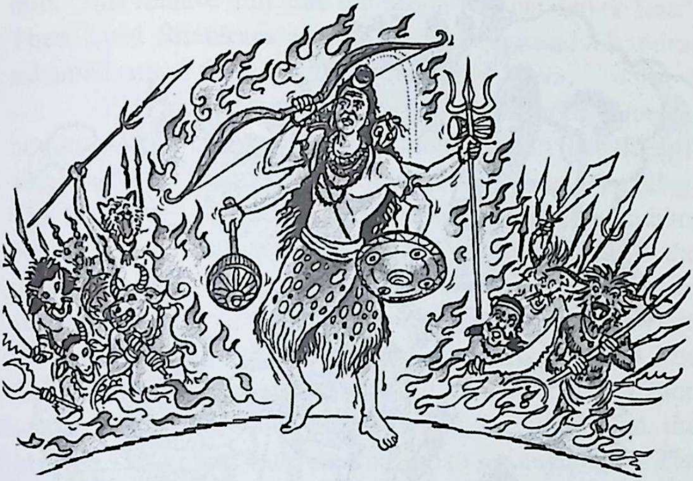


subjects' incomes in taxes, and does not give protection to those who are oppressed by the mighty goes to *Raurava* hell. On the other hand, that king who administers justice equally, be it to his son, brother, minister, to a poor man, or an outcast, gains heaven. A king is there for his subjects' protection. If he does not make reasonable efforts to do that, and acts with envy, out of ignorance, or distraction, that king's kingdom will certainly be destroyed. Have no doubt."

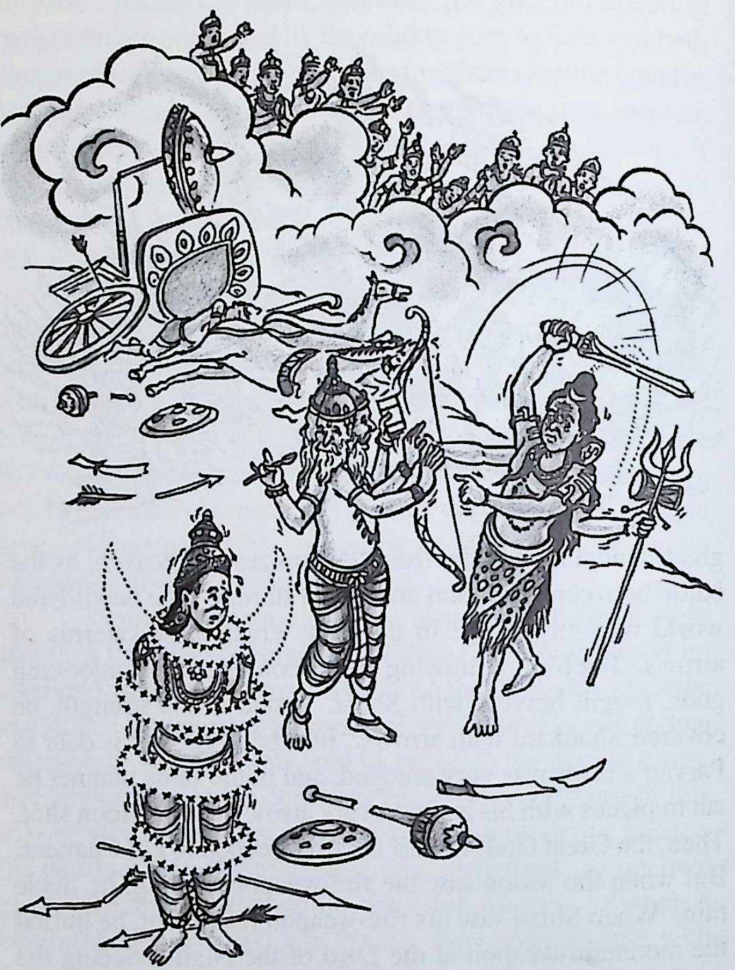
But even when he was provoked in this way by his own guru, Indra remained silent out of fear of Chandra's prowess, even though he was holding the mighty thunderbolt weapon right in his hand. Out of fear of Chandra, neither the Sun, nor Varuna, nor Vayu, who is the best of the strong, nor Kubera, nor Agni, stood up in his defense. Neither the gods, nor the gandharvas, nor the yakshas, nor the asuras, nor the kings, stood up to fight. All of them were dumbfounded by Chandra's overwhelming powers.

Seeing that men and asuras, along with the gods, were afraid of the Moon's might, the Great God, Shiva stood up and rebuked them, "Shame! Shame on this assembly of Gods, and shame, again, on the bravery of the Gods! Having shown disrespect to all the Gods, and likewise, to the demon kings, and having shown his contempt for Vishnu and myself, this evil-minded Moon, after performing the Rajasuya rite, abducts the dharma-wife of a brahmana, and particularly of his own guru, without understanding the consequences of such a heinous act! I will take my *Pinaka* bow and do battle with this Chandra. In no time I shall wipe off the guru's tears." Having said this, Shiva seized the great divine bow and rose up with his legions, as if burning the three worlds with his wrath.

When the Moon heard that Shiva was coming to battle, he came out of his palace, mounted on a chariot. The earth trembled, and all the mountains shook. A violent wind blew, and thousands of meteors fell. The directions were filled with darkness and clouds rained buckets of blood. A



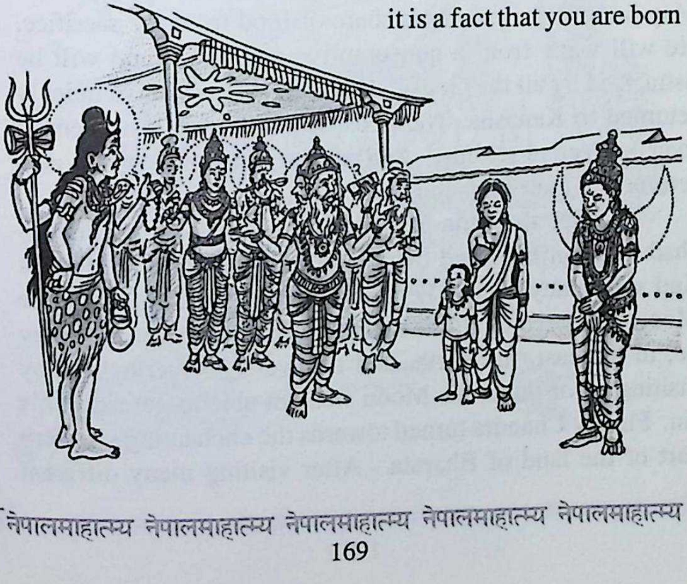
great lamentation came from the denizens of heaven, as the battle between the Moon and Shiva started. The bewildered world was enveloped in darkness created by swarms of arrows. The Moon, showing off his courage to the onlooking gods, fought bravely with Shiva. Proud of his strength, he covered Shankara with arrows. But the Lord who is dear to Parvati's heart was very enraged, and in the same manner he cut to pieces with his arrows every arrow that the Moon shot. Then, the Great God shot off the fire-weapon to kill Chandra. But when the Moon saw the fire-weapon coming, he made rain. When Shiva saw his fire-weapon rained out, he hurled the mountain-weapon at the Lord of the Night. Seeing the mountain-weapon racing towards him, the mighty Chandra, in order to neutralize the mountain-weapon, shot off the wind-weapon. Then Shiva discharged the terrible serpent-weapon, with its fearsome garland of flames. Noticing the serpent-weapon coming towards him, darting its tongue out like the Lord of Death, the Moon, in an instant, countered it with the Garuda-weapon. Then Shiva quickly ensnared the Moon with the Rudra-weapon, while the asuras, nagas and demons looked on. Seeing that the Moon was at his wit's end, Shiva came



closer and started to cut off his head with a sword. There was a great lamentation from the spectators, and Brahma interceded, preventing Shiva from killing the Moon. "He is not to be killed!" cried the Grandfather of the Worlds. "The Lord of the Twice-born is not to be killed, O Shiva! Great God, leave him unharmed. "Shankara, suppress your rage!"

Having heard Brahma's appeal, Shiva replied, "Let the Moon give Tara back to Brihaspati, and he will be released. Otherwise, I will kill this wicked Moon right before your very eyes." Hearing Shiva's stipulation, Brahma reassured him, "Just release him, and the Moon will hand over Tara." Then Lord Shankara set the Moon free, and Chandra, ashamed, stood there staring at the feet of Shiva.

An assembly of the gods, with the demons, serpents, and kings was convened. They looked totally bewildered, standing dumbfounded and still, like figures in a painting. The Moon, out of the fear of Shiva, brought Tara with him. Now in the meantime, while the Moon had fought with the mighty Shankara, a son of the Moon was born to Tara. And so Tara came out of Chandra's palace with her child. When they saw her like that, all the gods were shocked. The Grandfather of all the Worlds asked Tara directly, "O Tara, whose son is this, the Guru's, or on the other hand, the Moon's?" But Tara was too ashamed to say anything.... The gods all laughed and laughed. Because of the gods' loud laughter, Tara's son also became ashamed and said to his mother, in the presence of the gods who were watching: "Mother," said the child. "tell me who my father is, or I shall give up my life. All the Gods are laughing at me in your presence." Tara spoke to her son in a loud and clear voice, so that everyone could hear, "O son, it is a fact that you are born



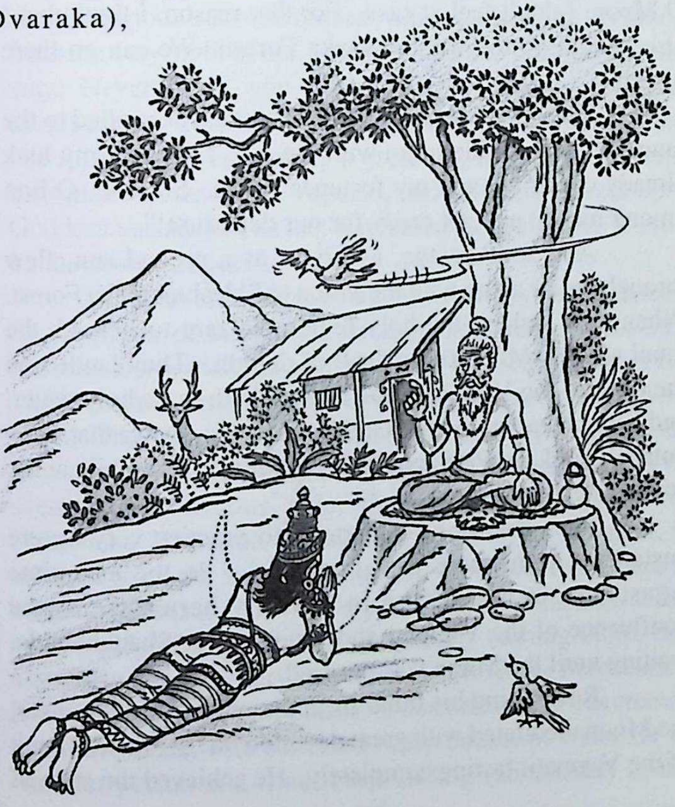
from the (seed of the) Moon, in the soil (i.e. wife) of Brihaspati."

When he heard Tara's admission, Brahma said to Brihaspati, "Please take back the lovely Tara, and let her son be given to the Moon." Hearing Brahma's words, the Guru of the Gods said to the Grandfather of the Universe, "Brahma, this boy is mine, not the Moon's at all. O Grandfather, please give Tara back to me, along with the child." But when the Moon heard Brihaspati's demand, he said to Brahma, "O Grandfather, this son is mine, certainly not Brihaspati's." Brahma spoke again, "Now, let us have no more quarrels between the Moon and Brihaspati. The truth only is what Tara said, prompted by her son. One thing is for certain–the one who performs a rajasuya sacrifice certainly finds suffering. And so it is in this case, where the Moon got only grief for all his efforts. O Shiva, since this child spoke like a wise man in front of all the Gods, in my opinion, let him be called Budha (wise, the planet Mercury)."

Then Brihaspati took the lotus-eyed Tara, and the Moon took his rightful son. In the midst of the assembly, Shiva spoke, "The Guru's wife was abducted by this evil-minded Moon, and so he is now bonded with a major sin. May he be deprived of his share of food from the sacrifice. He will wane from a consumptive condition, and will be ostracized by all the Gods." Having said this, Shiva quickly returned to Kailasha. The gods, led by Indra, also went to their respective realms. And all the kings and munis also returned to their own abodes.

After that, the Moon, with a great sin casting its shadow upon him, and overcome by consumption, did not find solace anywhere. For the purification of his body, the Moon wandered to all the sacred tirthas, wherever they may be, in the east, the north, and the west. Nevertheless, by visiting all of them, the Moon was not able to get rid of his sin. Finally Chandra turned towards the enchanting southern part of the land of Bharata. After visiting many different tirthas there, he finally arrived at the delightful hermitage of the muni *Agastya.*

When the Moon arrived at Agastya's ashram, the sage looked at him and realized immediately that his visitor must be bowed down by grave sin. Agastya simply said to him, "Take your seat." But instead, the Moon threw himself on the ground, prostrating like a stick in front of the benign sage, and cried out, "O muni, fool that I am, out of infatuation I abducted the wife of the Guru! O brahmana, because of that I have become a great sinner. There is no comfort for me! All the sacred bathing places, shrines, and groves, I have visited. I have gone to all the seven holy cities (Ayodhya, Mathura, Mayapuri, Kashi, Kanchipuram, Avantikapuri and Dvaraka),



and lived in each of them for some time. I am observing vows nowadays. O muni, still I could not get rid of my sin. I am exhausted from all of this. Do tell me quickly, blessed one, how can I atone for my sin?"

Agastya listened compassionately to the Moon's words, and then he gently said to him, "O Lord of the Twice-born, because of your dulled state of mind, just like a beast, you pounced upon Brihaspati's wife. By abducting your guru's wife you have really acted like an animal! Therefore, go to the God who is the Lord of all the Animals (Pashupati) in Shleshmantaka Forest. You must worship Him, then you will be purified. I had also left Kashi on account of my attraction for the Vindhya Mountain. But from that time on, O Moon, I don't feel at ease. For that reason, I think that I also should go to Shleshmantaka Forest. We can go there together."

When the Moon heard these words, he replied to the muni, "If you decide to go with me, Sir, I can feel my luck already changing, and my fortunes rising. So arise, O lion among munis, and get ready for our departure!"

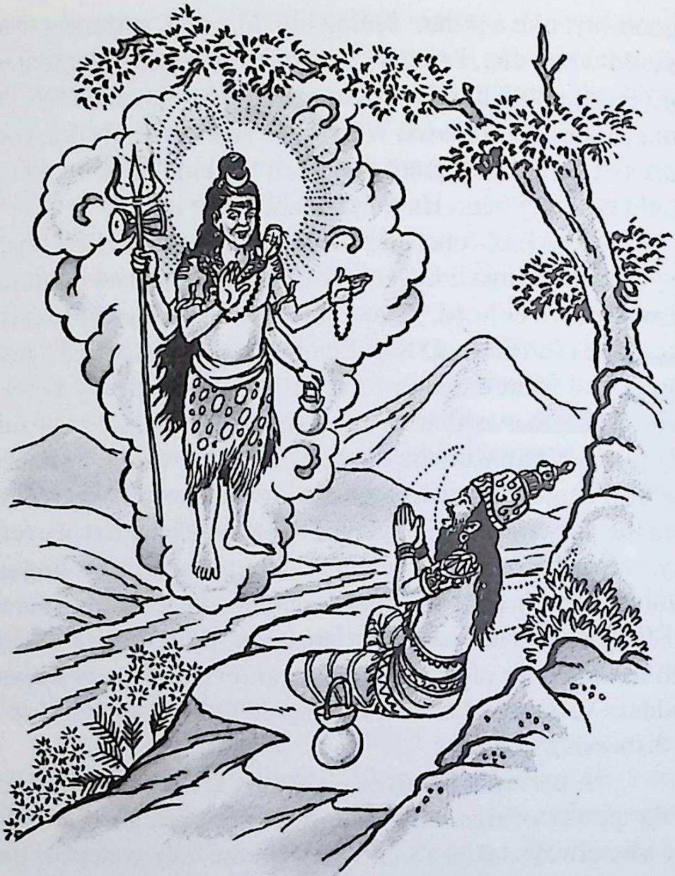
And so, Agastya, as bright as a second sun, flew through the air along with the Moon to Shleshmantaka Forest. When they sighted the holy region, so rare to behold, the muni and the Moon felt a thrill of delight. They landed on the bank of the Vagmati, took a ritual bath in its holy water, and had a reverent look at Goddess Vatsala. After that, they both beheld Lord Pashupati, and stood still for a while at the southern gate of the shrine.

Then the Moon undertook to practice very severe austerities, right there near Pashupati. In the meantime Agastya's set himself up in a lovely hermitage at the confluence of the Vagmati and Manimati at Shankhamula, waiting until the Moon was purified.

Restraining his mind from the objects of the senses, the Moon meditated with great devotion on the western bank of the Vagmati, fasting completely. He achieved the state of immobility, like a pillar. Seeing him like that, suffering from the cold wind, etc., Lord Pashupati was pleased. Contented, Lord Pashupati Himself appeared to the Moon, and said, "O Moon, I am well pleased with you. Ask earnestly for your heart's desire. I will grant you even the kind of boon which should not be given. Have no doubt about it."

The Moon, opened his eyes, and saw Lord Pashupati. He prostrated himself like a stick on the ground, and muttered these words, "O Lord, if you are pleased, I request to have two wishes fulfilled. O Shri Shambhu, the first is that I may be released from the sin of having had sex with my Guru's wife. The other is that you tell me about the glory of this holy place, along with the method of Your worship." Having heard the Moon's fervent request, Shiva said to him, "O Moon, from the very sight of me, you have become purified in every way. Nevertheless, you yourself should establish a lingam of mine in my holy land. Any man who, on account of some bad fortune is overcome by a great sin, if he takes a sacred bath in the water of the Vagmati, and reverently gazes upon Goddess Vatsala and on me, is released from all sins. There's no discussion about it.

"A person who gives up his life at my southern side, by the power of this holy land, does not even go near hell. He, who always takes a sacred bath in the holy waters of the Vagmati at my eastern side, will earn a great stock of religious merit. The sacred bathing place, which springs forth in the time of the rains from my trident, called Mrigodaka, can be seen by the virtuous. He who bathes at the source of Mrigodaka Tirtha, on the western bank of the Vagmati, is released from the sins committed in previous lives, there is no doubt about it. There is a place called Vadarika, on the eastern side of the Vagmati. By merely bathing there, one assuredly pleases Parvati. There is a tirtha here called Koshodaka, granting the objects of one's desire. It was created by all the Gods, who collected every bucket of water for it. He who performs a ritual besprinkling (abhisheka) at the



Koshodaka bathing place, or in the sacred water of the river in front of it, gets the fruits of performing the Ashvamedha sacrifice. That twice-born, who goes there at the three designated times for sandhya, and performs those rites, is released even from the sins he may have committed unknowingly.

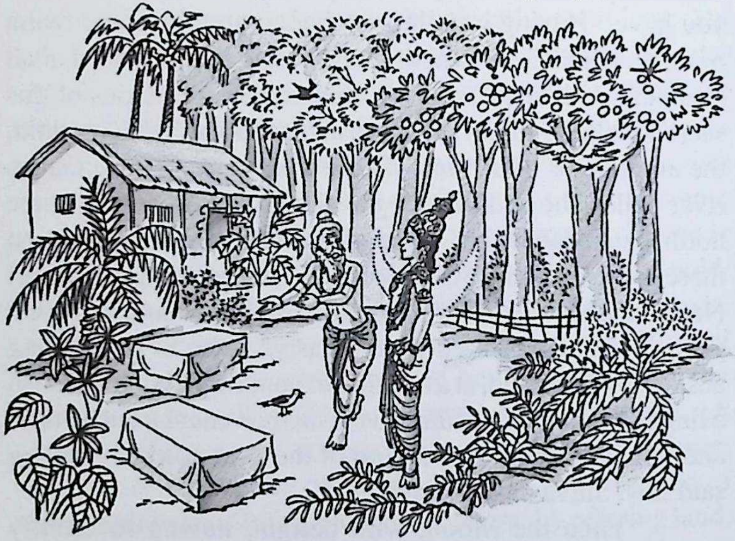
Moreover, there is also a cave called Bhrigupatana (Bhrigu's leap). By flinging oneself into the precipice there, one is honored in heaven. A person who ritually bathes in the beautiful chasm of Brahma at the foot of the Bhrigu cave will certainly go to the realm of Brahma. There is a tirtha here called Gokhuraka (cow's hoof), granting the objects of desire.

He who performs a ritual consecration there will obtain the merit of donating a thousand cows to brahmanas. A man who takes a sacred bath in the Vagmati at the foot of Gaurishikara Hill, has good luck with regard to his wife, and ultimately goes to the realm of the Goddess. A man who, having gone to Skanda Kunda, takes a holy bath there, at his end becomes brilliant like the God of Fire, and goes to the realm of Skanda. There is a tirtha here called Panchanada (five streams), graced by Brahma. By merely taking a sacred bath there, the benefit of performing the five great sacrifices is obtained. A man, especially a brahmana, who bathes in the auspicious Shulodbhava Tirtha, obtains the recollection of his previous life. One who gets to the hidden tirtha of bathing waters, protected by the guhyakas (attendants of Kubera), and bathes there in the prescribed manner, goes to Yajnaloka (the realm of the sacrifices). The God of Death will surely not cast an eye upon him who takes a sacred bath in that tirtha called Yakshodaka (yaksha waters), which comes out of a cave. A sacred bath in the Yoga Kunda, and in the Deva Vapi, and also in the Kumara Pond of the Kumara Cave, is taken by those desirous of heaven, especially by brahmanas.

"In my worship and adoration, propitiating Vasuki is always the first thing to do. A man who bathes my image with ghee, with honey, and even with curd, or with the juice of sugarcane, with scented water, with milk, or with cool water, has his religious merit fructify greatly. By that alone, the best of men obtains a high place in heaven. By my command, a man goes to my realm by bathing my image with ghee, and by performing an ablution of honey, he goes to my abode. By bathing me with yoghurt, he goes for sure to the realm of Vishnu. By performing a lustration in the juice of sugarcane, one assuredly attains the position of a vidyadhara, by scented water, the rank of a gandharva, and by a bath with milk, one attains the status of the Moon. By performing my ritual bath with cold water, a man is released from all sins. Indeed, he who performs the worship of my image's limbs with different kinds of flowers, having enjoyed the attainment of all his desires on earth, ultimately rejoices in my abode. He who arranges devotedly the illumination of the limbs of my image, will be born in self-luminous lands. The devotee who performs circumambulation of the limbs of my image, will become beautiful, rich, adamantine like a *vajra,* youthful, and learned. He will journey through this world accompanied by sons and grandsons. He who, with devotion and great effort, offers worship to the limbs of my image will be long-lived, strong, brave and a great lord. He who out of devotion, lights a row of lamps around my temple, will have good eyesight and will become extremely brilliant and honored in the world. He who, with devotion, burns guggula (bdellium resin, gokul dhoop) before me, after having enjoyed comfort in this world, finally goes to the supreme state. By the offering of a vessel full of sesame seeds, one is protected from great peril, and similarly, by offering gold, and likewise, by offering a cow together with sesame seeds. One who offers me a cow, with her horns and hooves covered with gold and silver, with a bronze bell hanging from her neck, and with a calf, will have the rewards of a sacrifice. A king who offers a robe covered with precious stones to me, will have an abundance of gems. One will be possessed of many clothes, by offering clothes to me, and by offering land, he will have enough lands. By offering songs and dances pleasing to me, accompanied by the sound of musical instruments, a man becomes an attendant of mine, free from distress. By offering to me blue lotuses, or an arka flower (Calotropis gigantea), or a lotus, one obtains good fortune. I am especially inclined towards conferring boons on those offering vaka flowers (Sesbana grandiflora) and bilva (wood-apple) leaves to me. Even by offering me datura flowers, one gets moksha. I become a bestower of wealth to the one who offers oleander flowers to me. By offering fragrant flowers to me, such as jasmine, one can find a propitious path in life. He who worships me regularly, with flowers, leaves, fruits, and holy waters, rejoices, without a doubt, having obtained the joys of heaven. He who worships with devotion my favorite animal form, is released from the chains of animal birth, and obtains the fulfillment of his desires. And one who gives food to the brahmanas in this holy land of mine, reaps the reward of a sacrifice, and reaches the realm of heaven."

Then Lord Pashupati spoke again to the Moon, "O Chandra, do observe my worship with as much devotion as you have. Having installed my lingam in this sacred realm of mine, which is so hard to reach, you will be cleansed of all sins, and will enjoy success. Behold the boundaries of this sacred realm of mine! In the east, there is the holy Kaushiki, the annihilator of all sins. In the west is located the Ganga river called the Trishulaganga. Similarly, the border to the north is supposed to be Shivapuri, and in the southern direction there is the holy river Shitalodaka. The most holy region of Nepal is said to lie between these. Now, O Moon, you must go to the most blessed sage Agastya, who is performing austerities there, and, at a location of your own liking, establish a lingam, exactly according to the method enunciated by him, and you will again be the Lord of the Brahmanas." Having said this, Shiva disappeared.

Then the Moon, with delight, having reverently bowed down to the divine Pashupati, went directly to Shankhamula. There, he saw the resplendent hermitage of Agastya, adorned with pomegranate trees, flowering karnikara trees (Cassia fistula), champaka trees (magnolias), and brightened with jack-fruit trees, with mango trees, and orange trees, lit up greatly with lemon trees, and citron trees, and date trees, decorated with jasmine and Lavanga creepers, accompanied by malati and mallika jasmine flowers. It was enchanting with the pleasing hum of roving swarms of bees, it resounded with breezes made cool from the touch of the Vagmati waters, with the sound of different birds, and with the song of the cuckoo, removing the distress from the minds of the people visiting there. Then the Moon entered the tapovana, an unurpassed grove for performing religious austerities. When he saw the Moon completely purified, Lord Agastya, filled with great delight held him in welcome. When Agastya saw that the Moon, who was now filled with an abundance of brilliance, had sat down at his request, he asked the Lord of Brahmanas with affection, "Whatever the divine Lord Pashupati has Himself commanded, O Moon, relate all of that to me." Having heard the words of Agastya, the Moon spoke these words, "By your grace, O foremost of brahmanas, I am purified from the sin of defiling the Guru's bed. I have seen Lord Pashupati, who grants enjoyment on earth, the bliss of heaven, and emancipation. The God of Gods commanded that I, myself, must establish a lingam in this supreme holy region of Nepal, which is a place so hard to reach, even for the Gods. It is to be done according to the method you prescribe, and with you chanting the mantras, and so forth. The Lord also told me about the benefits of the main tirthas in His vicinity. Out of mercy for me, the manner of His worship was also imparted to me by Him. Hence, O foremost muni, on God's command, I have come to you. Arise, O lion



among munis, and let us go to Pashupati. Having worshipped Pashupati by the prescribed method, I am to undertake a strenuous pilgrimage with you, Sir. I am also to establish a lingam at a place favored by me. The installation is to be done with all the rituals prescribed by you, lion among munis."

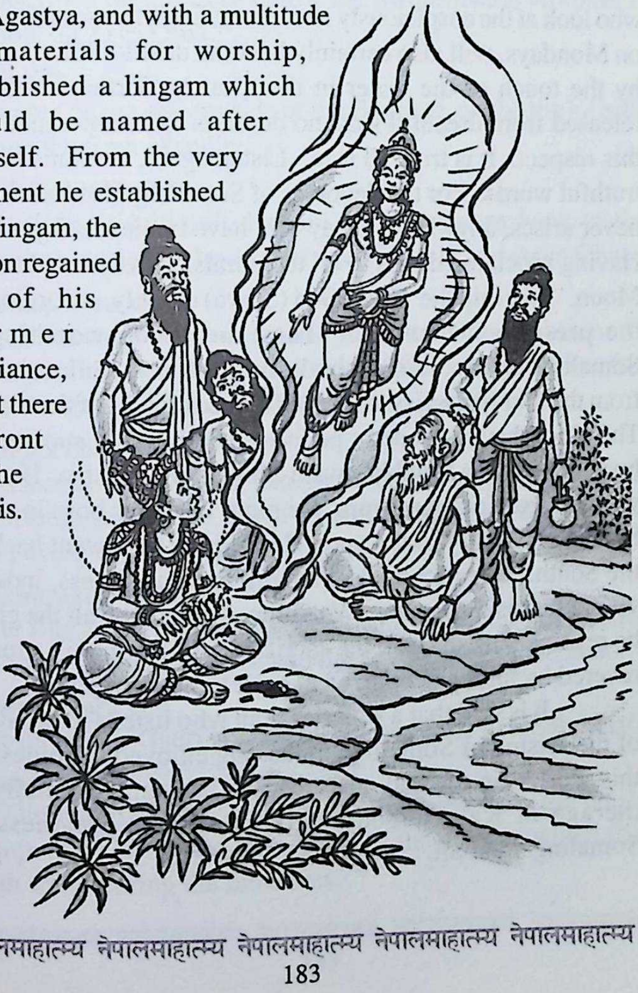
When he heard the Moon's excited speech, Agastya spoke once more, "I certainly ought to perform the ceremonial worship of Pashupati. And you, Moon, should go on pilgrimage with me to the holy bathing places. Set up a lingam quickly, at whatever spot you like. I, also, should establish a lingam in this place." Having said this to the Moon, Agastya, having made up his mind to establish a lingam, said to Chandra, "O Moon, collect the materials needed for offering oblations into the sacred fire. Summon the great munis residing in Nepal to take part in the upcoming celebration of the establishment of a lingam."

At the Moon's invitation, all the great munis living in Nepal came. On an auspicious day, and at the most auspicious time, the celebrated Agastya, along with the other munis, erected a sacrifice hall not too far from the confluence, in a most lovely and holy place. Having adored Hara (Shiva) with devotion, the great muni, gave many kinds of charitable donations to ensure the smooth completion of ten million oblations in the prescribed manner. Agastya dug with a spade a spectacular tank, and declared, "There will always be water flowing out from Patala in this tank." Then he established a lingam which was called Kumbheshvara.

In the Kali Yuga, those men who will be the devotees of Kumbheshvara, having enjoyed happiness in this world, will all go to the supreme state. Because this lingam was established by the muni 'born in a jar' (Agastya), after having performed very severe austerities, and having worshipped Shiva well, it was called Kumbheshvara (Lord of the Jar-born One) by the wise. Those who reverently gaze upon Kumbheshvara on the fourteenth day, the eighth day (of the dark and bright moon) and on the Sankranti day (of the sun's they proceeded to visit the Stana Kunda, and Pashu Kunda, and then went to Guhyeshvari. Having worshipped Guhyeshvari with a great assemblage of materials and having visited many other tirthas, together with Agastya, surrounded by a band of munis, the Moon went to the great lingam of Gokarnesha. While looking at the sacrificial ground there, Agastya said to the munis, "Here, in this very place, *Ravana* practiced very terrible austerities. It is here that Ravana performed a sacrifice most difficult to do. By the dint of his austerities, the descendant of *Pulastya* obtained the matchless land of *Lanka*. The king of the demons subjugated the Gods. By the grace of Gokarnesha he became invincible in the three worlds."

After Agastya told the Moon and the munis all about Ravana and his clan, the whole group went to Karunikeshvara. Having reverently beheld Karunikeshvara, and made charitable donations there, the wise Moon went to gaze upon Vajrayogini. Having worshipped Vajradevi well, and according to the assemblage of materials for worship that he could collect, the Moon went to Dolagiri to behold Lord Narayana. After that, he went to Anantalingam which destroys every sin, and then he and Agastya set out to reverently behold Kumbheshvara again. From there, they both walked for some distance, till the Moon felt tired and sat down to rest near a small pond. Right then, the Moon saw a sparrow that had come to drink water from the pond, being pounced upon by a falcon. When the Moon saw the sparrow in the falcon's claws, he was filled with pity, and wrested the sparrow from the other bird's clutches. He realized that the sparrow was about to die, and so the Moon, along with Agastya, out of pity, laid the poor creature down by the water. The sparrow breathed his last there, at that beautiful holy bathing place. Thereupon the sparrow left his bird's body behind, and took on a divine body with ornaments shining like molten gold. Then, messengers of Shiva, looking like Shiva himself, descended there bringing with them an excellent heavenly chariot, bright like a blazing fire. They sat him in the chariot, where he took on the look of a vidyadhara, and sparkled like another sun. They fanned him with fans of yak tails. The Moon and the munis were amazed at the sight. The Moon turned to Agastya and said, "I shall establish a lovely shivalingam at this very holy bathing place." Having himself seen the fate of the sparrow, and having heard the Moon's wish, Agastya filled with joy, said to him, "Yes, do install a great lingam at this sacred tirtha, which is so hard to find."

Then the Moon, with the most sacred mantras uttered by Agastya, and with a multitude of materials for worship, established a lingam which would be named after himself. From the very moment he established the lingam, the Moon regained all of his former brilliance, right there in front of the munis.



After that, the virtuous Lord Agastya said to the munis, "Listen to my true words, all ye munis, ye best of brahmanas! Since this unsurpassed shivalingam has been established by *Soma* (the Moon), its name will be Somalingam. A man absorbed in devotion, having taken a holy dip in the Chataka Tirtha (the Sparrow's Sacred Bathing Place), and having beheld Lord Somalingam, is assuredly released from terrible sins. On the fourteenth days of the lunar months, and on Mondays, those men who reverently behold Somalingam, one of the finest lingams on earth, will have success at hand. Those people, who look at the auspiciously risen Somalingam, even casually, on Mondays, will also certainly become dear to Shiva. Even by the touch of the water in the Chataka Tirtha, a man is released from dreadful sins, no doubt is to be entertained in this respect. It is true, all true! Listen again, O munis to my truthful words. For the devotees of Somalingam, misfortune never arises, anywhere. They will have money and grains." Having proclaimed this to all the munis, Agastya said to the Moon, "Worship the Great God (Shiva) quickly, according to the prescribed manner." Then the Moon worshipped Somalingam, according to traditional manner, while mantras from the four Vedas, issued forth from the mouths of the munis. The Moon, having properly performed the worship, surrounded by munis went to Kumbheshvara-Shiva, with Agastya. Having worshipped Kumbheshvara, the muni who was born in a jar, having reverently gazed upon Harasiddhi, then went back to the South. The Moon, also, having become sinless, indeed, set out for his own realm. Worshipped greatly by all the gods, he regained his share of the sacrifice. All the munis, greatly revered by all the people, went each to his own place.

It is said that a superior man who listens to the story of the arising of Somalingam, having enjoyed happiness in this world, in the end, also reaches heaven. Generally in the age of Kali, nobody truly knows the greatness of Somalingam at all.

Location of places mentioned in the story

(in order of appearance)

Shankhamula
The confluence of the Bagmati and Manohara rivers north of Patan city.

Mrigodaka Tirtha
A small stream which used to appear during the rainy season near a small trident in the inner sanctum of Pashupatinath temple. Nowadays it is paved over, but the name of the tirtha is inscribed on the steps below the Mrigeshvara/Virupaksha temple on Arya Ghat.

Vadarika
The area on the eastern side of the Bagmati, on the the hillside above the Ram Mandir.

Koshodaka Tirtha
This tirtha is presently located on the western bank of the Bagmati, under the bridge between Vatsala and Arya Ghat.

Bhrigupatana cave
On the western bank of the Bagmati, near Surya Ghat, north of Arya Ghat, on the eastern side of Kailash Hill, there is a cave covered by a door. Above it rises a steep cliff.

Brahma bheda
Was located at the foot of Bhrigu cave. Nowadys, it is difficult to discern due to the effect of earthquakes, landslides, and the paving of the river bank.

Gokhurakha Tirtha
Near Bhrigu cave there was a rock with the footprint of a cow. It cannot be found now, due to the paving over of the ghat.

Gaurishikara Hill
The hill above Gauri ghat on the western side of the Bagmati.

Skanda Kunda
At Dhruvasthali, a short distance south west from the police camp, there is a slight depression in the ground, which fills with water during the monsoon.

Panchanada Tirtha
On eastern bank of Bagmati, near the Narayan Temple, there was a confluence of five streams, but nowadays it has been overtaken by various constructions.

Shulodbhava Tirtha
Same as Mrigodaka Tirtha.

Yakshodaka Tirtha
At one time it used to come out of the Bhrigu cave. Now it is no longer discernable due to construction of steps leading from the cave.

Yoga Kunda, Deva Vapi, Kumara Pond
Near the front of Vishvarupa temple there were three ponds. The traces of only one remains now.

Kaushiki
The Koshi river.

Trishulaganga
The Trishuli river to the west of Kathmandu Valley.

Shitalodaka
The Chisapani Khola in Makwanpur Zone, south of Kathmandu Valley.

Kumbheshvara
The temple of Kumbheshwara is located in a large compound at Konti Tol, in the northern part of Patan. The lingam itself is made of black polished stone. Next to the temple is the celebrated kunda. The major festival here is during the full-moon in the month of Shravan (Jul./Aug.)

Rajarajeshvari
See Chapter 3. The well in which one could see one's future birth is located on Rajarajeshwari ghat. It now has a large lingam called Virateshwara on top of it. In order to spare others similar embarrassments, King Shivadeva I (590 – 604) had it covered over after, instead of a vision of his future birth, he saw a dead dog floating in it.

Bhairava
The Unmatta Bhairava to the south of Pashupati temple, in the main courtyard.

Vatsala see Chapter 3.

Stana Kunda
Stana Kunda is covered over nowadays by a small open-air shrine with two breast-shaped stones. It is located in front of the military camp on Dhruvasthali.

Pashu Kunda
This kunda is located behind the Vishvarupa temple, towards the north-west. Nowadays it only has water in it during the rainy season.

Guhyeshvari see Chapter 3

Gokarnesha see Chapter 3

Karunikeshvara see Chapter 3

Vajrayogini see Chapter 3

Dolagiri see Chapter 3

Anantalingam see Chapter 6.

Somalingam
In the village of Sumlingtar, southwest of Bhaktapur on the road to Lubhu, can be found the Somalingeshvara lingam. It is a naturally formed stone lingam covered by a fallen Pipul tree. Perhaps its original shrine was destroyed by the tree. In all probability this is the Somalinga mentioned in the Nepal Mahatmya. The similarity in the name and its location approximately three kilometers from where Anantalingam is situated (near Gundu village) would tend to confirm that.

Chataka Tirtha
Nearby Somlingeshwara there is a Shiva shrine with a bathing place called Charkandeshvara. This could be the Chataka Tirtha.

Harasiddhi (27)
Now called Harisiddhi, this town is located about four kilometers south-east of Patan on the road to Godavari.

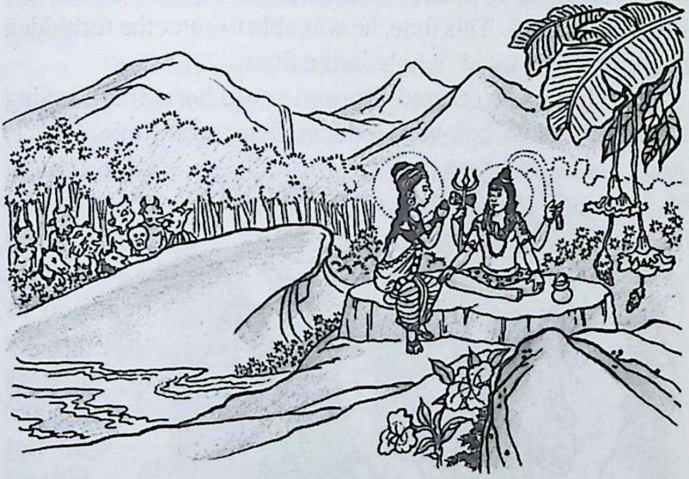
9

How Bhringi, as Gunadhya, Circuambulated the Sacred Valley and Got Back His Divine Powers

Long ago, on the silvery peak of Kailasha–sparkling with metals of different colors, festooned with many waterfalls, adorned with silvery ponds surrounded by borders of white-blooming reeds, stocked with different trees bearing in all seasons exquisitely-tasting fruit, carpeted with flowers, full of caves and caverns brimming with gems, thronged by flocks of apsaras, along with siddhas, and vidyadharas, glittering with the ambrosia-like currents of the Mandakini river, the heavenly Ganga, covered with swarms of golden lotuses, scattered with wish-fulfilling cows grazing in groves of wish-fulfilling trees, always resounding with the songs of different birds ever fascinating to the ear, and caressed by soft and fragrant breezes– Shiva, the three-eyed embodiment of supreme bliss, white like the moon, smeared with ashes, was sitting on a tiger-skin.

The mountain was entirely encircled by a terrifying collection of Shiva's diverse troops and cohorts. Some of them had cat like mouths, while others had tiger faces, and others, still, had lion faces. Some had no legs, and some had many legs, while some had only very short legs. There were those among this gruesome group who had no ears, while others had many ears. Some had cow ears, or donkey ears, some horse ears, camel ears, or elephant ears. Some among this wild bunch had huge bellies, others were hump-backed, or looked like monkeys. Some of them were very tall, some had dreadful and unusually shaped fangs, and huge mouths, or had mouths in their stomachs. Some had monkey faces, others had mouths like boars. Some had many hands, and some had no hands at all. Each and every one of them was gruesome in his own way.

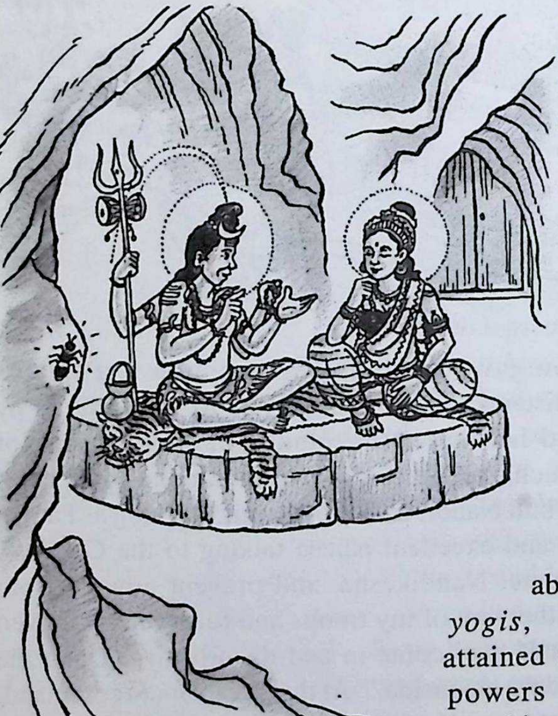
When Parvati, the Mountain-born Goddess, saw Shiva in a secluded place, with his face so bright, laughing and speaking with a radiant smile, she bowed to her Lord respectfully with folded hands, and full of interest, asked him politely, "O Great God, O God of Gods, adorned with the moon upon the crest of your head, tell me a good story, Lord, a most vivid and colorful one. I want to hear a story born fresh from your lips, which has not yet been heard by anyone else. Having listened to that picturesque tale from you, O Lord, I shall re-tell it to my girlfriends, and they will be thrilled with it, O Lord of the Worlds."



Shiva gave all his loving attention to Parvati's request. He listened, and smiled. Then he took Parvati by the hand, and led her to a secluded building in one of Kailasha's enchanted groves. He summoned his chief attendant, the bull Nandi, and said to him, "As long as I am in this beautiful and excellent palace talking to the Goddess, stand at the gate, Nandikesha, and prevent anyone from entering. Neither any of my troops and followers, nor even Brahma Himself may come in and disturb myself and the Goddess while we are inside." At the Great God's command, Nandikesha set himself at the gate. Holding a huge staff in his hands, from that moment he prevented anyone from entering. Then Shiva went inside with his spouse, bolted the door, and began telling Parvati an absolutely fascinating tale.

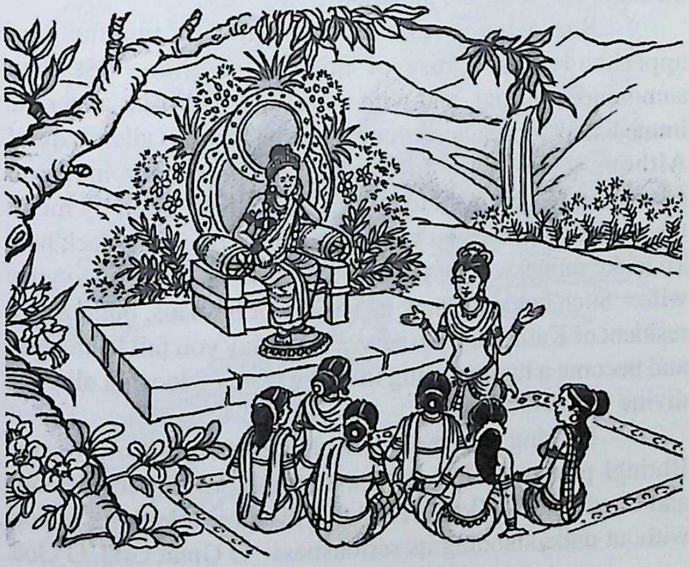
In the meantime, Bhringi, one of Shiva's chief attendants came near that place looking for Shiva. When Nandi stopped him from entering the gate, Bhringi, in dismay, returned to his house, and pondered over the situation for a while. It was most annoying to be barred from Shiva's presence, he thought to himself. Also, very intriguing... He then assumed the appearance of a black bee, and buzzed back to the building in which Shiva was telling his nectar-like stories to Parvati. This time, he was able to enter the forbidden apartment by way of a hole in the door.

Just as he entered, Bhringi could hear Shiva saying to Parvati, "Now, beloved Goddess, listen to my tale. This is something that even the Gods and demons, beguiled as they are by my powers of illusion, do not know. Only realized sages, who venerate Your lotus feet know about it. Also *yogis*, who have attained supernatural powers by Your worship may realize it.



At the beginning of creation Brahma obtained its powers from You. He first created the waters, and then the earth. He dispersed the primordial seeds, and created all the creatures out of the five elements. The creatures appropriated these seeds, and lived by accumulating them. They were nourished by them, and gradually became strong, clever, and bold. Ever bewildered by Your illusory powers, embodied creatures never know you and me in our benevolent form..." Bhringi listened to the divine tale with rapt attention. When it was completed, as soon as he got home, he told his wife, Vijaya, that extraordinary story which he heard from the very mouth of Shiva.

The next day, Goddess Parvati, sitting on a beautiful seat, said with a smile to her lady companions, like Vijaya, and others, "I will tell you a wonderful story, which no one has heard yet." Then Jaya and the others, folding their hands in a gesture of supplication, said to Parvati, "Please tell us, O Great Goddess, who destroys the arrogance of demons." When Parvati knew that her friends are interested, with great gusto,



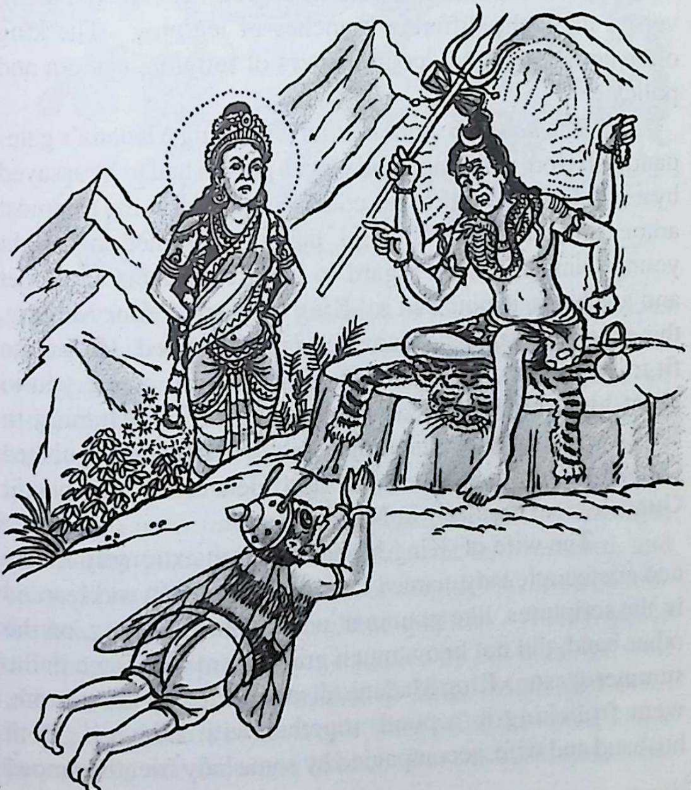
she happily began to relate the very tale she had heard from the mouth of Shiva, and just the same way he told it. In the middle of her telling of it, Vijaya stood up from amidst her companions, and said to Parvati, "I already know that story, O Goddess, and if you tell me to do so, by Your grace, I shall be happy to finish it" Parvati reluctantly consented, and Vijaya told the story. When she heard the same story that Shiva had told her from Vijaya's mouth, Parvati became quite upset. She rose up, and went straight to Shiva.

When Shankara saw the one dear to his soul extremely disturbed, he asked with deep affection, "Why are you so disturbed, beloved?" With trembling lips, and her body shaking over and over, Parvati said angrily to her spouse, "O Great God, until today I did not know your crooked heart. It turns out that the story which you told me with the utmost secrecy, O Lord, had already been told by you to Vijaya, as well. I was put to shame in front of my girl friends, and it's all your fault, my Lord." Shiva immediately said to Parvati, "Do not be dejected, O slender-waisted one. Let me first meditate on the whole situation."

Shiva went into meditation that instant, and apprehended the cause of this indiscretion. He then summoned Bhringi, and with eyes reddened from anger, he immediately pronounced a curse on him, "O you vile creature! Although you were forbidden to come near me, you surreptitiously listened to a secret story being told by me to the Goddess, while you were in the form of a big black bee. To make things worse, you repeated the whole story to your wife. Such behavior may be worthy of humans, but not of a resident of Kailasha, who serves me. May you fall from here, and become a human being in every respect, loosing all your divine powers."

Hearing this most terrible curse from Lord Shiva, Bhringi prostrated like unto a stick before the Great God, and cried out, "O God ! I did this disagreeable thing to you without understanding its seriousness. O Great God, O God of Gods, please forgive my fault. Which other God except you, Mahadeva, would tolerate a mistake such as mine, the blunder of a stupid and wicked fellow, who errs at every step?"

When he heard Bhringi's pathetic pleas, Shiva, who is an incomparable treasury of mercy, said, "O Bhringi, my words can never prove false. You must fall from here and be born a human being. You will become a learned, pious and accomplished brahmana on earth. After composing nine hundred thousand verses containing all the poetic sentiments in them, and having established a Shivalingam in a most rare and holy place, you will give up your humanness, and again reach Kailasha."

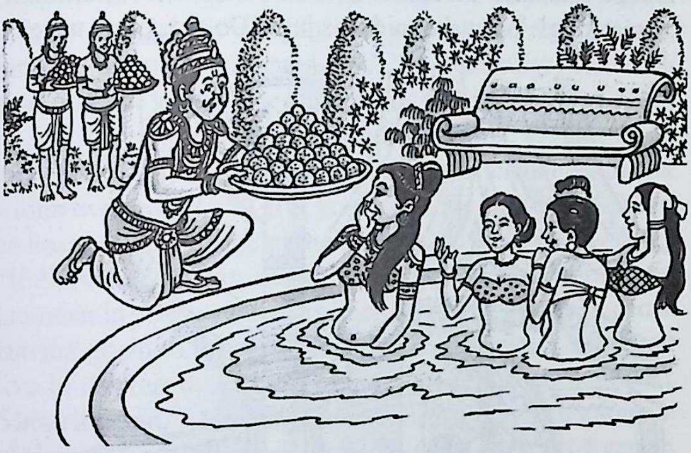


As soon as Shankara concluded the verdict, the anguished Bhringi fell to earth because of his own misconduct. He was born in Mathura as the son of a brilliant brahmana, called Vishnudatta. His father performed the birth ceremony and his other rites with perfect concentration. From an early age, the boy was taught grammar along with other branches of learning, until he became well-versed in all the shastras. He became famous all over the land as *Gunadhya* (Abundance of Talents), and the most accomplished among the twice-born.

After his father's death, the resolute Gunadhya endowed with all the good qualities of an excellent brahmana, went to the city of Ujjayini where King Madana was the ruler, looking for employment. The king had a great respect for learning. He maintained a council of great scholars (pandits), versed in all the different branches of learning. The king often sought their advice in matters of religion, custom and policy.

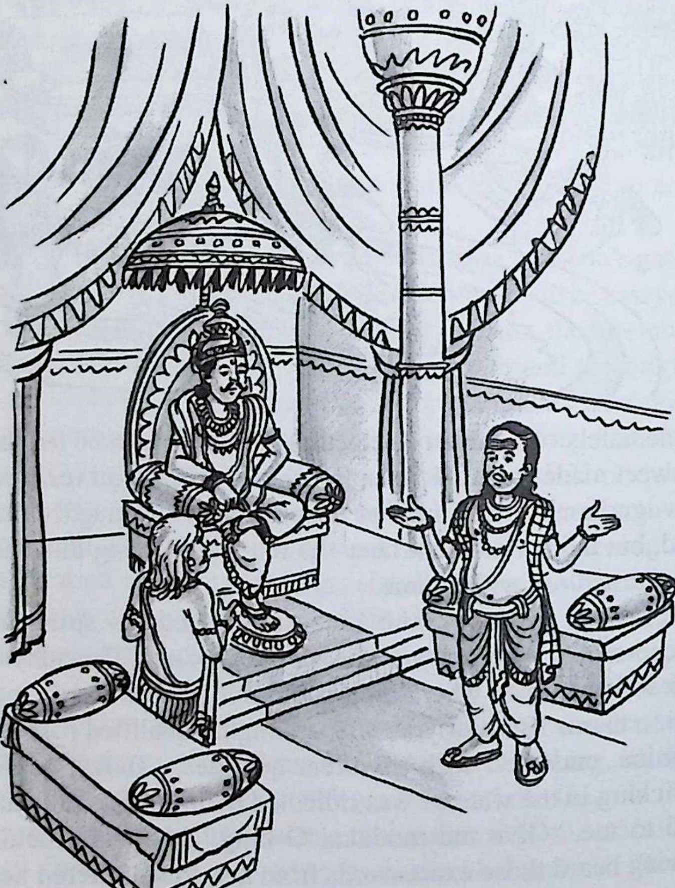
The *acharya*, Sarvavarma was King Madana's gate-pandit. Before petitioning the king, a person had to be assayed by a scholar at the gate to the court. Sarvavarma, the foremost among the learned in Ujjayini, having examined the bright young Gunadhya with regard to his great talents as a poet and a scholar, announced to King Madana, "Your Majesty, this excellent brahmana Gunadhya is aptly named. He is quite fit to serve you as a pandit, therefore, may it please you to grant him employment at your gate." After listening to Sarvavarma's advice, the king established the distinguished Gunadhya as a pandit at his court. Henceforth, the pandit Gunadhya sat regularly at Madana's gate.

The wife of King Madana was an extremely lovely and aristocratic lady, named Lilavati. The queen was learned in the scriptures, like grammar, and so on. The king, on the other hand, did not know much grammar at all. Once in the summer season, King Madana, discomforted by the warmth, went frolicking in a pond, together with Lilavati. Both husband and wife, accompanied by some lady friends romped in the pool and played, repeatedly splashing each other with handfuls of water. Lilavati, worn out by the water-dousing and completely exhausted, said to her husband, "No more water, please." (Modakam dehi) Having not understood what the queen was saying to be a negative request, the king thought Lilavati was asking for sweetmeats (modaka), and immediately offered her a selection of many-flavored laddus (a sweet made from chickpea flour). When Lilavati realized how ignorant of grammar her husband was, she laughed out loud, but then, a moment later she felt bad. Seeing this, the king turned red with shame.



The next day, the king summoned his spiritual preceptor, Sarvavarma, and the foremost pandit, Gunadhya, to a solitary place where they could not be overheard, and said to them, "Both of you, sirs, are highly qualified pandits of mine, endowed with excellent qualities. Today, while frolicking in the water, I was ridiculed by my wife. Lilavati said to me, 'Give me modaka, O king.'(Modakam dehi) Having heard those exact words from her, I then offered her immediately one thousand laddus. But the queen just burst out laughing when I did so. Only a moment later, she became embarrassed. Then I felt sad and very ashamed of myself. What is the meaning of the word 'modakam' in this context, O two foremost of brahmanas?"

When they heard the king's question, the virtuous brahmanas, both clever with words, gave the following ingenious explanation; to the king, "O king! Queen Lilavati is the younger daughter of the king of Gauda. She knows various branches of learning, like poetry and grammar. O great king! What she said was just, 'Do not splash water.'



While playing in the water, the context was not understood by you, Sir, and so she laughed. There is no other reason for it."

Having listened to their line of reasoning, Madana said again to the pandits, "O great brahmanas, in how much time can I acquire a good knowledge of grammar? I have great doubts if I ever can." After the king had finished, Gunadhya said to him, "Your Majesty! I can impart to you a complete knowledge of grammar within twelve years, without a doubt." Listening to Gunadhya's claim, Sarvavarma, foremost among the learned, said, "O great king, I can teach you complete knowledge of grammar within only two years."

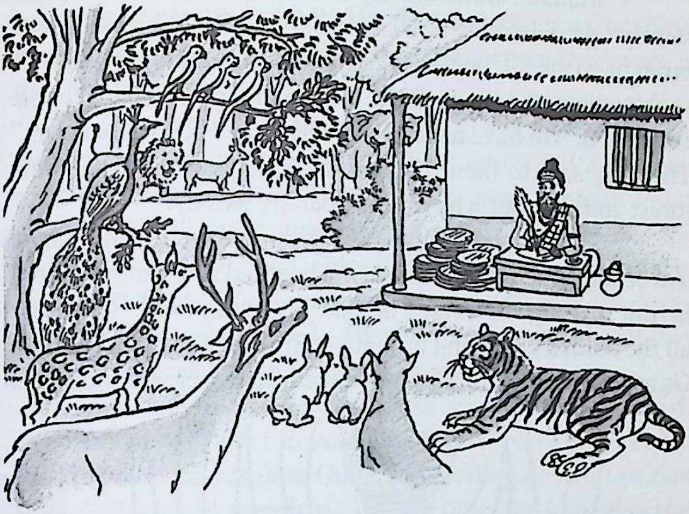
Having heard Sarvavarma's assertion, the king again said to him, "If you can really make me proficient in grammar within two years, I will give you half of my kingdom." When he heard this exchange of theirs, Gunadhya said to the king, "If Sarvavarma can really engender the knowledge of grammar in you by two years, then I will give up the shastras. Having given to Sarvavarma everything I own, I will go to live in the forest. For as long as I live, I shall never use Sanskrit again." Hearing the excellent brahmana's solemn pledge, Sarvavarma gave a vow to Gunadhya, "If I cannot bring about the king's firm grasp of grammar within two years, O foremost among brahmanas, for as long as I live, I shall forgo Sanskrit. Having given all my possessions to you, sir, I will go and live in the forest, without fail." After making this vow, Sarvavarma stood up and went home.

That night Sarvavarma worshipped Shiva's son, *Kumara,* with incense, lights, and eatable offerings, accompanied by extreme devotion. And at midnight, Kumara became pleased with Sarvavarma, and appeared before him. Seeing Kumara, Sarvavarma performed a reverent salutation. Shiva's son asked the man bowed in front of him, "Ask for a boon, O great brahmana, for I am undoubtedly pleased with you." Sarvavarma spoke then, " If you are pleased with me, O Lord, then give me a short very concise grammar by which

King Madana could certainly become well versed in grammar." Having listened to this request, Kumara of boundless valor, created a grammar called "Kalapa", and gave it to the brahmana. The acharya, took that book away with him, and taught it to King Madana with great zeal. And King Madana became a real pandit before the two years were over.

When Gunadhya saw what a firm grasp of grammar King Madana had acquired, he became crestfallen. He gave to Sarvavarma all his possessions, and having renounced the use of the Sanskrit language, withdrew to the forest. There Gunadhya constructed for himself a very beautiful hermitage. Everyday he would sanctify himself by smearing ashes of cow-dung on his body, for he kept a cow as many hermits did. After that, he would sit down with his tresses of matted hair piled on top of his head, and counting on a rosary of *rudraksha* beads, he would recite the name of Shiva all day.

Once, the most virtuous muni Pulastya, with a group of munis arrived by some divine chance at his ashram. Seeing the celebrated rishi, Gunadhya rose and went to greet him with respect. He seated Pulastya on a holy seat, and worshipped him, after washing his feet, etc. Gunadhya also worshipped the other munis who were observing their vows. Then Gunadhya, with his head bowed down, asked Pulastya who was sitting along with the munis refreshed and at ease, in common speech, "O most virtuous of munis, you know my entire story. How can I be rescued from this plight, O trove of mercy?" Pulastya was one of the most venerable among all the munis. He was an all-knowing son of Brahma, himself. He knew who Gunadhya was, and how he got to where he was now. The great seer's answer was immediate. In a commanding voice he said to Gunadhya, "You must first compose nine hundred thousand verses in the *Pishacha* language. After that, may you journey to that most beautiful pitha called Nepal, where having established a shivalingam, you will obtain release." After saying this, Pulastya returned to his hermitage, accompanied by the rest of the munis.

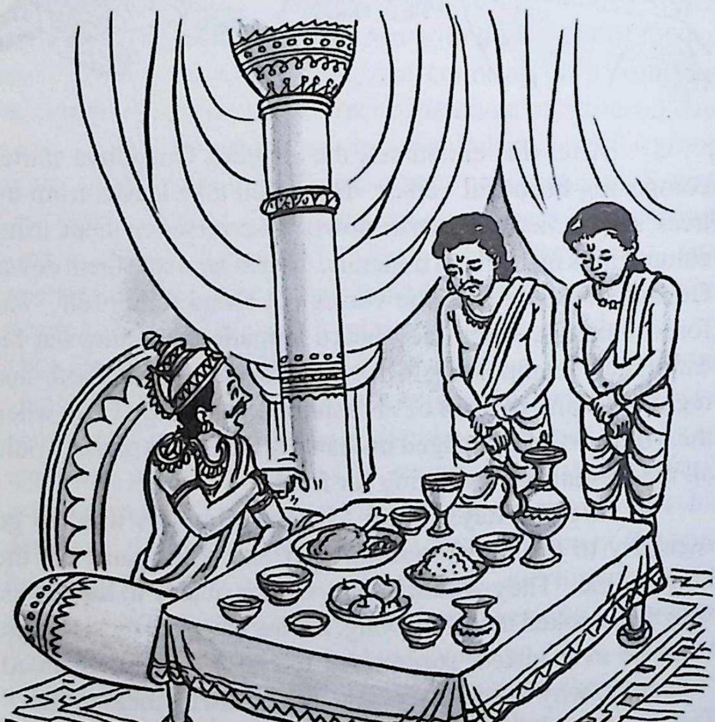


After this encounter, the virtuous Gunadhya started composing beautiful verses. He would take leaves from the trees, and immediately write down those verses on them, using colored inks made from minerals. When he wrote them down, Gunadhya would read the verses out aloud to himself. The forest animals, when they heard Gunadhya reading out his exquisitely composed stories, would leave their food, and regularly stand in front of his ashrama, listening. Only when the worthy ascetic engaged in chanting the Lord's name, would all the animals go searching for food.

In those days, King Madana's hunters used to go regularly to the forest hunting deer and other game for the king's table. They would hand over the quarry to the cooks, who then cooked it up. The king, having eaten the most meagre meat he ever tasted, summoned the cooks, and demanded, "O cooks, why are you serving such scrawny meat to me ?" The cooks became anxious when the king complained to them about the food. They immediately justified themselves by saying, "We only cook whatever meat the hunters bring us, Sir."

Madana immediately summoned the hunters, and sternly asked them, "For what reason has fleshless meat been brought to the kitchen?" The frightened hunters replied with shaky voices, "O king, all the deer in the forest have become emaciated. We have no idea why they have become so lean." The king said to them "Listen hunters, you must go to the forest and find out why all the deer are skinny."

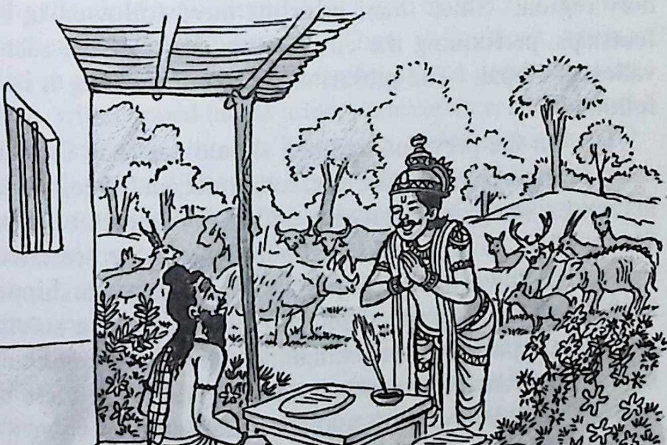
The hunters went to the forest. Eventually they came to a beautiful ashram. They saw a bearded and matted-haired hermit reciting the verses he had just composed. They saw all the animals standing around, completely still, listening to Gunadhya's stories. The hunters came closer, and began to



listen to what the strange hermit was saying. They soon became completely enthralled by the fabulous yarn Gunadhya was spinning, and just stayed transfixed where they were in the forest...

The next day, when the king was served a meal without meat altogether, he asked the cooks, with his eyes reddened from anger, "Why was the meal brought today without meat?" When the cooks heard the king's words full of anger, with their hands joined in supplication, they said to the him, "Your Majesty, the hunters who go into the forest for meat have not returned. They have disappeared as if they have really gone to the realm of Yama."

Having listened to the cooks' excuses, the wise king rose and went to the forest, along with Sarvavarma. There, the king saw the resolute Gunadhya, telling colorful stories, full of all sorts of surprises. At that time, the king also saw all the emaciated animals, without any meat or fat on them, listening to those stories, so pleasing to the ear, that they had virtually left off grazing. King Madana felt deeply moved by the story and by the scene he was witnessing. He praised Gunadhya, and strode towards him. When Gunadhya saw



the king and Sarvavarma arriving, he reverently saluted Sarvavarma as a guru, and bestowed a blessing on the king. He performed worship of both the brahmana and the king. Then the king and Sarvavarma conferred for a moment, and Madana said, "O Gunadhya, let us go back to the city, and you can do everything just like you did before."

At the end of these words of the king, Gunadhya said to the him, "Your Majesty, I know the regard that you have for me. I am yours, so out of affection you are saying all of this. But now, please just do this one thing for me. Take these beautiful stories composed by me in nine hundred thousand verses in the Pishacha language, and have them written down in Sanskrit. For I am going to the sacred land of Nepal, the most excellent among holy regions." Having said this, he gave all the leaves to the king, who returned with them to his city. After that, Gunadhya went to Shleshmantaka Forest.

When he reached the holy land of Nepal, the most venerable brahmana Gunadhya, having taken a ritual bath in the holy water of the Vagmati, and having reverently beheld Lord Pashupati, performed a circumambulation of the entire holy region. Since then, pilgrims have followed in his footsteps, performing the circumambulation of the sacred valley of Nepal. The prescribed manner of doing it is as follows:

On the previous day one should eat food fit to be eaten during a sacrifice, like rice, cows milk, and ghee, subdue his senses, sleep on the ground, and always remember Lord Shiva. Then, having performed ablutions in the prescribed manner at dawn in the Vagmati, and having worshipped Pashupati, the disciplined pilgrim should make a solemn resolution to perform the circumambulation. In the beginning, having mentioned the month, the fortnight, the date, and his purpose completely, he should speak this solemn vow: "O Lord, I shall perform the circumambulation of the holy region in the prescribed manner. O Great God, by your grace, let my solemn vow be fulfilled. Grant me permission, O Supreme Lord, Supreme God of the Gods." After praying for this permission, one should perform a circumambulation of Pashupati three times. Then, from the southern gate one should go to Goddess Rajarajeshvari. After that, having reverently beheld Lord Bhairava and Goddess Vatsala, one should cross the Vagmati, and go to Guhyeshvari. Having reverently saluted the Goddess Guhyeshvari, then one should walk to Chailaganga. Having bathed there, and having diligently reinvigorated the Progenitors with libations of water, one should go to Gokarnesha, the destroyer of great sins. After worshipping Him properly with great devotion and with elaborate offerings, one should pray for permission to proceed, and then go to Karunikeshvara. After that, one should reverently behold Goddess Sundari, and then proceed to Vajrayogini. Then, one should go to Garuda and Narayana in the east. After worshipping Him well, and with devotion, one may also gaze upon Kileshvara. After that, one goes to Vagishvara, granting excellence of speech. There, having bathed in the holy pond, a man should worship Valmikishvara thoroughly. One should halt and feed the brahmanas there. During the night, one should keep vigil, by dancing, singing and other devotional pastimes. Then, at daybreak, having bathed in the unsullied and beautiful sacred pond, the wise pilgrim, with cupped hands joined in reverence, should pray for permission to proceed, by saying, "Victory to Thee, O Lord Vagishvara! Victory to Thee, o three-eyed Maheshvara! O Lord, let this act of circumambulation of the holy region proceed without obstacles."

Having prayed for this consent, one should go to Trichampaka Pond. In that sacred bathing place with auspicious water, having satiated the Gods and the Forefathers by libations of water with prescribed mantras, one should worship the Vishnu there reclining perfectly on serpent's coils in the water. Then one should go to Chandeshvari, the annihilator of great calamities. Having worshipped Her together with Chandeshvara, one should go to the Dhaneshvara lingam, which gives an increase in wealth. After that, observing silence, a wise pilgrim should go to the Gokhureshvara lingam, with the sign of a cow's hoof-print on it. Having paid reverence there, one should proceed to the lingam called Indreshvara. Then, having taken a holy bath in the most beautiful confluence of the Lilavati and the Roshamati, and having properly praised the Progenitors, as well as having performed charitable acts according to one's capacity, and having worshipped Indreshvara, one should go to the Ashapureshvara lingam. After woshipping the lingam in the prescribed manner, then one may continue to Doleshvara. There, at Dhara Tirtha granting much virtue, one should spend the third night, with sacred dancing, religious singing, and listening to the Puranas. In the morning, having bathed and worshipped Doleshvara according to the rules, the best of men, filled with devotion, should pray like this for permission to proceed further, "Victory to Thee, o Mighty Doleshvara! Favorite of the people in this region. O God, grant me permission for performing this circumambulation."

Having received the permission, one should then go to Suryavinayaka, and pray, "O Ganesha, remover of obstacles who showers mercy over the devotees! O Lord, make this act of circumambulation of the holy region continue without obstacles for me." Having saluted the protector of the ganas with this mantra, with devotion and according to the prescribed rules, one should go to Anantalingam, granting religious merit, wealth, and the fulfillment of desires. There, having reached the lotus pool with unsullied water in front of the deity, and taken a holy dip in the water, as well as having satiated the Ancestors carefully with libations of water, and worshipped that lingam according one's wealth, the generous and virtuous pilgrim, subdued in mind, should, with reverence towards Shiva, give donations to the twice-born, according to his resources. After that, he must go to Vajravarahi who is saluted by all the Gods. Having reverently bowed down with devotion to the Goddess, he should then walk to Bharabhuteshvara. Having ascended the Bhujanga (serpent) Mountain, he should worship the Ganesha at the beautiful mouth of the cave, which is located at the boundary of the holy region. A wise man, having passed thru the hole shaped like a yoni, and having reverently bowed to Bharabhuteshvara, is released from all sins. He will not enter the womb again. After that, one who beholds both Vishnu and Shiva at the great Manas-shila Tirtha, and beholds Bhairava as well, is released from all his sins. Then, having turned back, he should walk to Matri Tirtha. Even today, there remain golden-speckled fish in that beautiful tirtha. Having taken a sacred bath in Matri Tirtha, and having beheld both Vishnu and Shiva, one does not enter a womb again, be he a man or a woman. Then having visited Harasiddhi, a man should go to Gopalesha. Having worshipped Gopalesha, and having beheld Lord Narayana, a man who is the subduer of his senses, should make his dwelling there at night, consuming food fit for a ritual sacrifice. One should keep vigil at night there with very auspicious songs and dances. And then, in the clear morning, having bathed according to the prescribed rule, the wise pilgrim should pray in the vicinity of Gopaleshvara for permission to proceed, "O Great God Gopalesha, remover of obstacles from holy region, by your grace, let the performance of the circumabulation of this holy land happen."

Having received this permision, a man should go next to Pandukeshvara. Having bathed in the Pandu river, and having reverently gazed upon Pandukeshvara, even a doer of evil deeds is released from all his faults. Then, having passed over the mountain, one should go to Chaturvaktreshvara. Having duly worshipped Him with devotion, one should go on to Indreshvara, who grants all success. Having worshipped Him properly with a great assemblage of wealth, after that, having crossed over the mountain, one should walk to Narayana in the west. There, having offered reverence to Narayana, one should stay the night. During the night, one should keep awake by reciting stories of Vishnu, etc. Then, at the clear dawn, having ritually bathed, one should pray for further permission there, standing near to Shri Narayana, "O Lord Vishnu, revered by the three worlds, grant me permission to go on. Let my act of circumambulating the sacred region, by your grace be completed."

Then, having received the permission, one should go to Buddhasthana. Here, the Buddha who arrived from Greater China, and sat on the lotus spreading field of infinite Light and source of supreme joy floating in the waters, self-abides. Here, the pious monks and nuns, who having left their sons and other relations behind are brought into contact with the joy of spiritual knowledge, live desirous of the darshan of the Buddha. Then, having circumambulated the shrine of Buddha, one should go to the Vishnumati river. Having bathed in it, and having properly satiated his forefathers with libations of water, a man should then go to Lunthikesha, where Lord Vishnu remains. Having beheld Narayana resting on the bed of Ananta, he should then go to the north, ever engaged in the rememberance of Vishnu. Then, having beheld that Narayana who rests on a seat of serpent's coils, there at the lower part of the mountain, a man is released from all wrongs. Then, one should go by the southern route to Jayavagishvari Shivaa. Having worshipped Her according to one's ability, having prostrated like a stick on the ground, and keeping Vishnu in mind, one should go to Lord Pashupati. Having reverently beheld the Divine Pashupati, one is released from all sins. Then one should bathe the Supreme God with the five kinds of divine food: milk, curd, ghee, honey, and molasses, and with the five products of the cow: milk, curd, ghee, urine, and dung. After that, one should worship Him according to one's might with various sweet smelling materials, with fragrant flowers and with incense and a multitude of eatable offerings. And then one should feast the brahmanas, and also give donations, according to one's ability. After that, with his cupped hands joined together in reverence, one should utter this mantram, "O Great God, God of Gods, dear to Parvati like Her own soul, by your grace, the process of circumambulation of the holy region is now complete." After properly intoning this mantra, one should walk to the Vagmati. Having taken a holy bath there according to the prescribed rule, and having satiated well one's ancestors, and also having beheld Goddess Vatsala, one should go to the southern gate of Pashupatinath. Then, gazing upon Vasuki, as well as on Vinayaka, the gate keeper in the east, the successful pilgrim should circumambulate the deity. The virtuous man who has attained his purpose should then return to his home. There, may the best of men, devoid of sin, now feast together with his friends.

After that, Gunadhya, foremost among those endowed with good qualities, having summoned all the munis living in the holy land of Nepal–those living near Guhyeshvari, those living near Vatsala, and those settled also at Shankhamula, those situated close to Kumbhesha, those settled at the sides of Pashupati, and those staying on Dolagiri, those living at Hanumat-Tirtha and, similarly, those settled at Vagishvara, those staying in the proximity of Chandeshvari, and those residing in the vicinity of Goddess Vajrayogini, those settled on the peak of Mrigendrashikhara, and those abiding at the source of the Vishnumati, and those living near Ashapureshvara, and those residing at Doleshvara, and those abiding at Bharabhuteshvara, and those settled at Gopaleshvara, and others, all the ascetics of subdued passions living at various tirthas in the sacred valley.

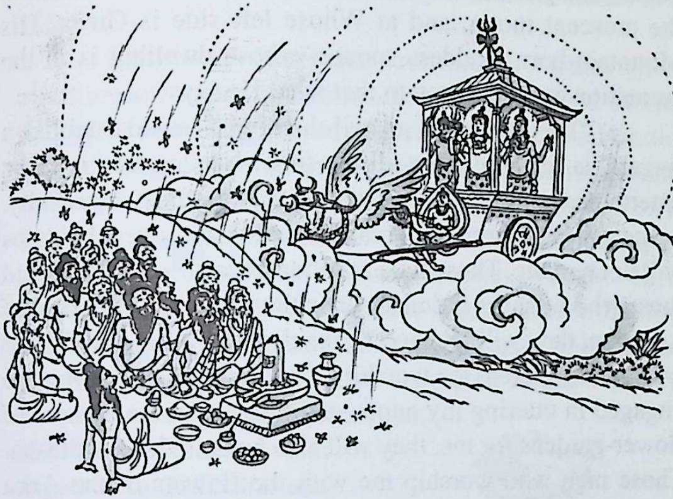
Then, having taken their consent, according to the method prescribed in the Veda, he began the task of establishing a lingam, by first offering oblations into the sacrificial fire. Then, the high-souled Gunadhya's sacrifice began. During it there arose a great uproar of "Please give! Please eat!" And so, the sacrifice of the high-souled Gunadhya flourished just like the sacrifices of *Marutta*, and indeed of Rama.

Then, at the conclusion of the homa, Gunadhya established a shivalingam. With his cupped hands joined together, and his neck bent down in reverence, Gunadhya said to all the ascetics, "Listen, all ye ascetic brahmanas! What name should be given to this shivalingam? You are competent to declare that!" Then, an outstanding muni and Brahma-rishi named Harita replied to the righteous Gunadhya, "Listen, Gunadhya! You are not an ordinary man. In your previous birth, for some reason, you were cursed by Shiva. Bhringi was your name, and you always stood guard at Shiva's gate. Accordingly, it seems right in every way that you affix the name 'Bhringishvara' to this lingam."

Having listened to the words of Harita, the muni Vedashira said, "Let the lingam be called Bhringishvara in the Dvapara age. Since this lingam named Bhringishvara is made out of touchstone, therefore in the Kali yuga, the people will call it by the name Suvarneshvara (the Lord of Gold). It will always grant all the objects of desire, O foremost munis."

Then Gunadhya of good qualities, showered the brahmanas with jewels, cows, cloths, and gold, pleasing them with his most excellent behaviour. At that time, a lovely shower of flowers fell down from the sky, celestial drums sounded, and groups of apsaras could be seen dancing. A wind pleasing to the touch blew, and the gandharvas sang elegantly. There, in the presence of the munis looking on, a beautiful bull-drawn heavenly chariot, with the chief attendants of Shiva in the form of Rudras standing in it, landed in front of them. This amazing chariot was full of many astonishing things. When they saw this great surprise, all those munis who had mastered the Vedas and their auxiliaries, excited in mind, jumped up.

Then, having descended from the heavenly chariot, the Rudra-like attendants, fair complexioned, with three eyes, besmeared with sacred ash, wearing rosaries of rudraksha seeds, holding divine tridents and damarus, and crowned with diadems from the tresses of their matted hair, with great elation said to the group of munis, "You sirs, all you munis knowing



the Vedas and Vedangas thoroughly, be seated on your holy seats and listen to our words!" Having heard the words of Shiva's attendants, Harita said to them, "All of you in the form of Rudras glowing like the sun, you sirs also, do sit down, and tell us everything completely." When they sat down, the ganas made this beautiful oration:

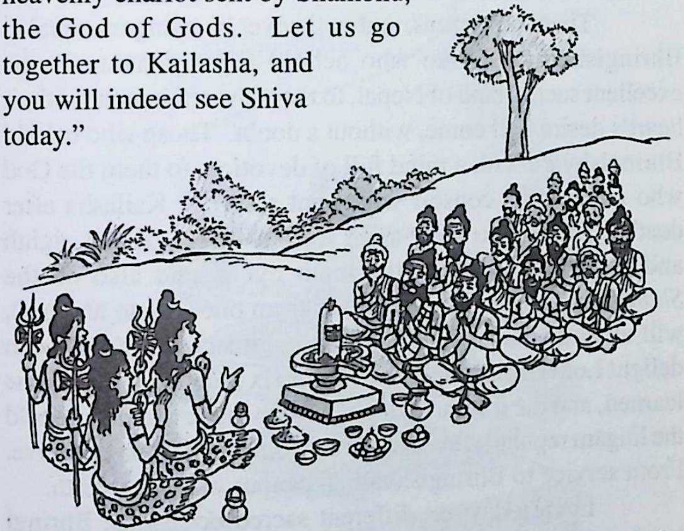
"He, Who is proclaimed among the Gods as the God of all the Gods, by Whom the whole world was created, Who protects the entire world, Who also annihilates all creatures, that God is the Supreme Lord. In this world, there is none who can speak of all the attributes of that All-pervading Universal Soul, that Rudra, Whom even the Vedas do not truly comprehend. He Who exists in His own form as the Supreme Soul in all the creatures, that God alone, full of eternal bliss, is absolutely all-pervading. He is devoid of qualities, though possessed of form. He is omnipresent, yet invisible–even Brahma and Vishnu themselves certainly do not know His limits. That all-pervading Great God is meditated on in person by all the Gods. By the grace of that

God, even the Gods like Indra, and so on, obtained the guardianship of their realms. That God, on whose forehead is the crescent moon, and at Whose left side is Girija, His Mountain-born Goddess spouse, whose dwelling is in the cremation ground–listen to that what He says!

"The man, even an evil-doer, who would establish a lingam, is released from all his sins. No question is to be entertained here. Good men who, disrespectfully, deceitfully, or merely for adornment, wear the rudraksha, even their sins will not remain. Those who are adorned with sacred ash, and those who wear the rudraksha, and those who are founders of a lingam, they will all become residents of Kailasha. Those who are devoted to the worship of my lingam, those who are engaged in uttering my name, and those who are makers of flower-gardens for me, they will also be bound for Kailasha. Those men who worship me with the flowers of the Arka plant, the Datura plant, or the Bilva plant (wood-apple), and with holy waters, will be Kailasha bound. And even a wrong-doer, or one who is engaged in all kinds of wrongdoing, is released by only establishing a lingam, let there be no doubt entertained here. Men who, contemptuously, or jokingly, even by allusion, utter my name, are released from dreadful offenses.

"Now this Gunadhya who is endowed with good qualities, and celebrated in this world by the people, is a man of good conduct, absorbed in yoga, who has mastered the Vedas and their auxiliaries. He is learned, a support of decency, a reciter of sacred texts, and a worshipper of the Gods. He is in particular my devotee, being always engaged in uttering my name. O munis, listen to the story of his previous birth. He was Bhringi before, a gana of great powers like my Nandi, constantly serving as my door-keeper, always assuming my form. One day, I was staying with the Goddess in a solitary place, telling her stories full of various emotions. All those private stories which came forth from my mouth, were heard by this Bhringi with his naughty mind, since he had assumed the form of a black bee, and hid out in disguise where I was. Then, he passed on my wonderful stories to his wife.

"And so," the ganas continued, "when all his mischievous activities became known to the God of Gods who is the inner regulator of all creatures, He cursed Bhringi, who fell from Kailasha, and became a man. Having obtained birth in a clan of brahmanas, Gunadhya became one of the foremost among the learned. He composed amazing and edifying stories in nine hundred thousand verses. In the faraway holy land of Nepal, hard to reach even for the Gods, he established a lingam, and thus he found again Shiva's grace. Come, O brahmana Gunadhya, be seated in this wonderful heavenly chariot sent by Shambhu, the God of Gods. Let us go together to Kailasha, and you will indeed see Shiva today."

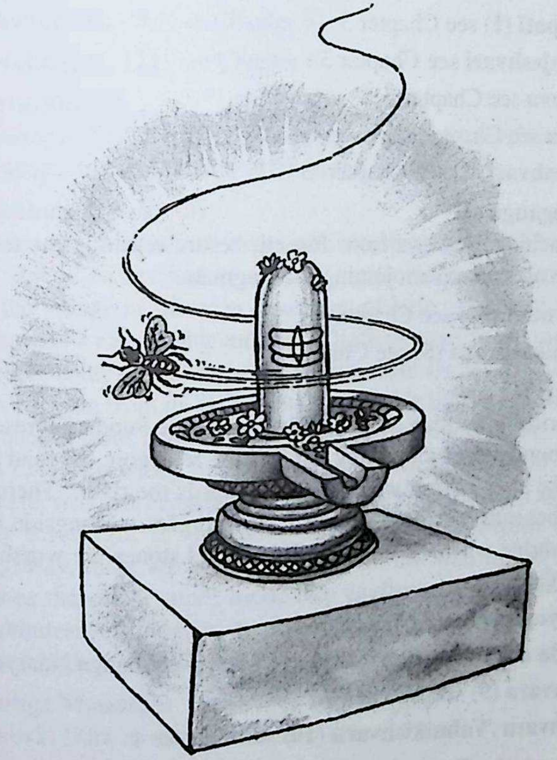


Having heard such wonderful words from the attendants of Shiva, Gunadhya looked up at the faces of all the munis endowed with terrific intensity. Among them, a muni named Chandatapa said to Gunadhya, "In the very beginning, the ascetic Harita declared, 'You are not an ordinary man, but an attendant of the God of Gods. A lingam has been established by you in the most excellent land of

Nepal. Now on account of it, the end of your curse has come. The Lord of Parvati has become pleased. Having mounted this excellent heavenly chariot, go and behold directly Maheshvara. With the blessings of the brahmanas and others, may you see Shiva soon." Having heard the muni's send-off, Gunadhya bid farewell to the best of the twice-born present there, and quickly mounted the most beautiful heavenly chariot. Then a cry of "Jaya" (Victory!) came out of the upturned mouths of the munis. A shower of flowers dropped from the hands of vidyadharas fell from the sky, celestial drums sounded and flocks of apsaras danced. There blew a breeze, pleasant to the touch, and the gandharvas sang liltingly. Merely by touching the heavenly chariot, Gunadhya, assumed the form of a Rudra, and then set out for Kailasha.

There never was, and will never be a lingam equal to Bhringishvara. Those who behold Bhringishvara in the excellent sacred land of Nepal, to them the attainment of their heart's desire will come, without a doubt. Those who behold Bhringishvara with a mind full of devotion, to them the God who is Parvati's consort will grant a stay at Kailasha after death. Those who gaze upon Bhringishvara on the eighth and fourteenth days of the lunar cycle, and also on the *Shankranti* day (when sun passes from one sign to another), will attain the supreme state. A brahmana who visits with delight Lord Bhringishvara daily for six months, will become learned, and the foremost of poets. Having reverently beheld the lingam regularly, even a barren woman will soon conceive. From service to Bhringishvara, a pauper will get wealth.

Even today, on different sacred occasions, Bhringi in the form of a black bee comes to gaze upon the Bhringishvara lingam. Having listened to this holy story about the appearance of Bhringishvara, that distinguished and pious man, who will also listen to the story of the victory of Shri Shambhu, with devotion, always having faith in Him, is released from all sins. But if one lacks mental purification, all religious deeds become fruitless. After listening to it, and having worshipped a brahmana with ornaments, clothing, and such, he verily obtains all that he wants soon, by the grace of Shankara. A brahmana obtains learning within a year, undoubtedly. From merely listening to it, a kshatriya will be victorious, and he will obtain immense wealth, so hard to get, even by a king. Having heard this holy story destroying great sins, a vaishya will be furnished with abundant wealth, and will acquire great virtue.



Location of places mentioned in the story

(in order of appearance)

Mandakini river
One of the streams of the heavenly Ganga. A headwater of the Ganga, flowing from the vicinity of Kedarnath, and joining the Alakananda (see Chapter 1) at Rudraprayag.

Mathura see Chapter 7

Ujjayini
A city in Madhya Pradesh, India. It is one of the four places where the great Kumbha Mela holy bathing festival takes place.

Pashupati (1) see Chapter 3

Rajarajeshvari see Chapter 3

Bhairava see Chapter 3

Vatsala see Chapter 3

Guhyeshvari (2) see Chapter 3

Chailaganga (3)
Approaching Gokarna from Jorpati, before reaching the temple, there is a small stream joining the Bagmati.

Gokarnesha (4) see Chapter 3

Karunikeshvara (5) see Chapter 3

Sundari (6)
The shrine of Sundari Mai is on the way to the Sundarijal reservoir in the northeast of the Valley. Before the reservoir, the road forks. Take the smaller trail which slopes towards the river. There, in a niche beneath the rocks stands a Shivalingam. Alongside it is a small shrine where some naturally-formed stones are worshipped as the Goddess.

Vajrayogini (7) see Chapter 3

Garuda and Narayana (18) see Chapter 4 (Changu Narayan)

Kileshvara (9) see Chapter 4

Vagishvara /Valmikishvara (10) see Chapter 4

Trichampaka Pond (11)
This pond is on Mahadeopokhri Dara, near Nagarkot. Walking on the scenic road which goes thru the military camp, after about 45

minutes one passes an observation/triangulation tower. After that, turn down a footpath on the right. It leads to the Mahadeopokhri Pond. Below that, and towards the left, there is a smaller pond with a statue in it.

Chandeshvari/ Chandeshvara (12/13) see Chapter 4

Dhaneshvara lingam (14) see Chapter 4

Gokhureshvara lingam (15) see Chapter 4

Lilavati and the Roshamati (16) see Chapter 4

Indreshvara (17) see Chapter 4

Ashapureshvara (18) see Chapter 4

Doleshvara/ Dhara Tirtha (19) see Chapter 5

Suryavinayaka (20) see Chapter 6

Anantalingam (21) see Chapter 6

Vajravarahi (22)

The shrine of Vajravarahi is located in a sacred grove of trees, east of Chapagaon village in the south of the valley.

Bharabhuteshvara (23)

This lingam is located in a cave on the southern slope of Phulchoki Dara. It can be reached by descending from Phulchoki peak, or from the village of Bhardeu, southeast of Lele. From the village one ascends a rather long and steep flight of steps to the mouth of the cave. Inside the entrance to the cave there are several stalactite stones hanging from its walls, which resemble the face of Ganesha with his long trunk and ears. Then, one can descend into the bowels of the cave thru a long tunnel-like passageway. (It's good to tie a rope here, which is especially useful for climbing back up again. A strong torchlight is also necessary.) At the bottom of this passageway, there are two chambers. In the wall of the second chamber there is a small niche-like cavity, and inside that, the Bharabhuteshvara lingam stands as a small stone, approximately one inch high.

Bhujanga Mountain

Pulchowki Dara in the south east of the valley.

Manas-shila Tirtha (24)

This most probably refers to the Sarasvati Kunda, a tirtha in Lele. Local informants say that much has changed here since the 1934 earthquake. Some time after the earthquake there was also a flood which swept away many images there. The tirtha water can still be found in a small well on the right side of the compound. The Shiva temple in the center of the compound, somewhat sunken due to the earthquake, houses the Tileshwar Mahadev lingam, a naturally-formed rock, resembling in shape the Tileshwar Dara Mountain, rising a short distance from there. If this is not the Shiva mentioned here, then it could be the Rameshwara lingam in a large striated rock standing directly behind the Bhairava shrine at Tika-Bhairav. The Vishnu mentioned here has not been located.

Bhairava (25)

The Bhairava shrine at Tika Bhairav stands at the confluence of the Nakhu Khola and Lele Khola, in the far south of the valley. Bhairava is represented here by a mask mural on the wall of the shrine.

Matri Tirtha (26)

Known as Mata Tirtha, this kunda is located in the southwestern foothills of the valley, close to the village of Kisipindi, on the way to Thankot. A small foot path leads to the tirtha from the road. There is a large water tank there with stone spouts. The main kunda is in the right-hand corner of the shrine, near a small temple housing a Shivalingam. Once a year, on the last day of the dark fortnight in the lunar month of Chaitra (Apr./May) thousands gather here to ritually remember their deceased mothers, and 'see mother's face' in the waters of the pool.

Harasiddhi (27)

This village is now called Harisiddhi. It is located in the south of the valley, on the road from Patan to Godavari.

Gopalesha/Lord Narayana (28/29) see Chapter 7
(Gopaleshvara, Shiva-Narayana)

Pandukeshvara(30)

The Pandukeshvara lingam resides in a temple in Tistung-Palung to the south of the valley, on the Tribhuvan Rajpath. The river Pandu is nearby. This lingam is also known as Tribhuvaneshvara. It is said that the present king's great grandmother prayed here for a son. When he was born, she named him Tribhuvan.

Chaturvaktreshvara (31)
We have been told by Yogi Naraharinath that the Chaturvaktreshvara lingam is in the village of Gimdi, in Lalitpur, to the south of the valley, but have not been able to verify that.

Indreshvara II (32) see Chapter 7

Narayana in the west (33)
The shrine of Ichangu Narayan, in the west of the valley, behind Swayambhunath.

Buddhasthana (34)
This refers to the Swayambhunath stupa in the west of the valley.

Lunthikesha (35)
This refers to the statue of reclining Vishnu at Balaju.

Narayana (36)
This image of the reclining Vishnu, to the north of the previous one, and 'at the lower part of the mountain' is the popular shrine of Budha Nilakantha in the north of the valley, below Shivapuri.

Jayavagishvari Shivaa (37) see Chapter 3

Guhyeshvari see Chapter 3

Vatsala see Chapter 3

Shankhamula see Chapter 8

Kumbhesha see Chapter 8

Dolagiri see Chapter 3

Hanumat-Tirtha

The confluence of the Vira and Bhadra rivers at Hanuman ghat, Bhaktapur. see Chapter 7

Vagishvara see Chapter 7

Chandeshvari see Chapter 4

Vajrayogini see Chapter 3

Mrigendrashikhara see Chapter 3

the source of the Vishnumati
Said to flow from Vishnu's foot, this river takes its source on the southwestern slope of Shivapuri Dara, above Budhanilakantha, at Bishnudwara.

Bhringishvara
This lingam can be found in the village of Sunakothi, south of Patan, on the road to Chapagaon. The large polished stone lingam is located within a domed temple in a large courtyard.

Glossary

Acharya (Ācārya)

A spiritual preceptor or teacher. He invests the student with the sacred thread, instructs him in the Vedas, religious mysteries, etc. An honorific title given to a scholar deemed to be an authority in his field.

Achyuta (Acyuta)

'The Unfallen'–A name of Vishnu.

Agastya

A celebrated sage, and author of several hymns of the Rig Veda. Agastya was born from the seed of Mitra and Varuna (see) when they discharged it at the sight of the beautiful nymph, Urvasi. Their seed fell all the way from heaven to earth, and landed in a water jar. Agastya was born in that jar, and is commonly referred to as the rishi 'born in a jar'. At first he took the form of a small shining fish. Finally he was born as a child. Agastya was a teacher of grammar, medicine, and other sciences. He is credited with spreading the Sanatana Dharma in southern India. Agastya is widely revered there, and believed to still be living in a secret ashram on the Malaya Mountain (the Western Ghats). He is also identified with the star Canopus, the brightest star in the sky of South India.

Agni

The Vedic god of Fire. He is the mediator between men and gods, and the protector of every home, where he dwells as an honored guest. Given by Brahma the Guardianship of the south-eastern quarter of the universe, Agni is also the priest of the gods, and the god of priests. Although he is ever-young, being born anew with every kindling, Agni is depicted as an old man with a flaming red body, carrying a burning javelin in his hand. His clothes are black, and his banner is smoke. The seven winds are the wheels of his chariot. It is drawn by red horses who leave a trail of ashes in their wake. Alternately, Agni rides a goat.

Amaravati (Amarāvatī)

'Abode of immortality'– The capital of Indra's paradise (svarga) on the eastern slopes of Mt. Meru. It has one thousand gates and a thousand palaces. Indra's palace, at the center of the city, is called the Palace of Victory (Vaijayanta). Fragrant flowers and sacred trees grow everywhere in Amaravati. It is the favorite playground of apsaras (see) and gandharvas (see), a realm providing all pleasures.

Ambika (Ambikā)

'The Mother'–a name of the Supreme Goddess as the mother of the world, in her main manifest aspect of Nature (Prakriti). As the world's mother, the Goddess is an ever merciful figure. She forgives all, and is kind even to her most ungrateful children, for "Sometimes a bad son may be born, but never a bad mother." (Shankaracharya). Even when fighting demons, the Goddess remains at heart a mother. She purifies her unruly sons with her arrows, dispatching them to heavenly worlds.

Ananta

'The Endless'–The thousand-headed serpent upon whom Vishnu rests when creation is withdrawn (see: Narayana). Said to be the son of Kashyapa ('Vision'), the original father of all living beings in the universe, and of Daksha's daughter, Kadru. After quarrelling with his mother and leaving her, Ananta performed austerities, and was rewarded by Brahma with the task of supporting the world on his hoods. Ananta is the king of the serpent race (Nagas), and the ruler of the nether worlds (Patala). He is also known as Shesha.

Apsara (Apsarā)

'Essence of waters'–Eternally young, beautiful, and voluptuous fairy-like beings. They arose from the waters during the churning of the ocean (see: Kurma avatara). Since neither the gods nor the asuras wanted them for wives, the Apsaras became public women. They are the mistresses of the s Gandharvas, heavenly dancers and courtesans. They are fond of playing dice and can bestow luck on those whom they favor. Apsaras also come to earth, usually to seduce the ascetics whose austerities might challenge the supremacy of the gods. Their alluring manner and sweet words rob those who see them of their wisdom and intellect. Apsaras can even induce madness in men, and the Atharva Veda (see: Veda) gives spells and incantations against them.

Aryan (Ārya)

'Noble, pure, cultured, spiritual'–a member of Vedic (Hindu) society and culture. A follower of the Sanatana Dharma, the eternal law-religion-custom based on the revelations of the rishis (see).

Ashram (Āśrama)

Ashrams were the dwelling places of the rishis, of their families and students, and also of the old, who after a lifetime of strenuous activity raising a family, retired from the world and devoted themselves to spiritual enquiry and to their religious duties. Ashram life was austere, with most of the items needed for survival being procured from the forest by the occupants themselves. They dressed in clothes made of bark, leaves and grasses, and of deerskin. They subsisted on fruits, roots, leaves, and milk. They abstained from meat, eggs and liquor. The life of ashram inmates consisted largely of reciting the Vedas and other scriptures, performing various religious rites, observing ascetic vows, and periods of meditation and japa. After finishing their daily duties, the sages sat surrounded by their disciples, and carried on discussions about religion, philosophy, and dharma. Cherished and respected by the rulers and the society in general, these sages were seen as custodians of the spiritual heritage of the country and the guardians of righteous rule by the kings. The ashrams of great sages became sacred centers of learning and culture, where the young sought refinement and education, and the old repaired to for peace and spiritual guidance.

Ashvamedha (Aśvamedha)
One of the most ancient Vedic sacrifices. It was performed by sovereign rulers and crowned kings in order to assure themselves the attainment of all prosperity, the winning of all victories, and the acquisition of all objects of desire. After an elaborate consecration, a perfect horse, accompanied by an armed escort of princes and warriors, would be sent out by the king performing the sacrifice and allowed to roam freely for one year. If in the course of his wanderings the horse strayed into the territory of another sovereign who did not accept the supremacy of the horses owner, the latter had to meet force by force, conquer the territory of the other king, and free his stallion so that it may continue wandering and eventually return to its original country, where the sacrifice would be consummated with the horse being slaughtered. Because of this, only a king who commanded the allegiance of neighboring kings and thus was recognized as a paramount ruler, could perform this sacrifice successfully. It was believed that whoever succeeded in performing a hundred Ashvamedhas would be transported to heaven and depose the existing Indra, occupying his throne. The last known Ashvamedha was performed in the first half of the 18th century by Savai Jayasingh, king of Amber.

Asura
'Anti-god'–Powerful enemies of the gods. Most of them are the offspring of Kashyapa, one of the original fathers of all living beings in the universe, with one of his wives, who were all daughters of Daksha, the leader of the Progenitors (Pitri). Among asuras, the daityas are from Diti, the danavas from Danu, the rakshasas are from Khasa, and the rakshas are from Muni. They appear in many forms: animal, human, or monstrous. They are always fearful, huge and powerful, with flaming eyes, sharp fangs, etc.

Balarama (Balarāma)
'Rama the strong'–The elder brother of Krishna. When in his mother's womb Balaram was miraculously transferred into the womb of Rohini, another wife of his father Vasudeva, thus escaping sure death at his uncle Kamsa's hand. Balarama is sometimes counted as the seventh incarnation (avatara) of Vishnu, or as an incarnation of Ananta . He is usually depicted as a strong young man of fair complexion, dressed in blue or red; his hair is tied in a knot on top of his head, and he wears an earring in one ear. Balarama carries a club, a plow, and a pestle as his weapons. He has an irascible temperament, and is extremely fond of wine and intoxication. For that reason he is often seen followed by his wife Revati carrying a jug with her.

Banasura (Bāṇāsura)
A notorious daitya. Bana was the eldest son of Mahabali, the demon renowned for having been tricked out of the dominion of the three worlds by Vishnu's fifth incarnation, the Dwarf (Vamana avatara). Bana obtained a boon from Shiva that Parvati should consider him as her own son, and that he should have 1000 hands to defeat all his enemies. Even when the demon was finally defeated by Krishna and Balarama, Shiva pleaded for Bana's life, and Krishna spared him.

Bhagavati (Bhagavatī)
'The Supreme Goddess'–The combined power of the triune godhead; the creative aspect of divinity, conceived as female. (Also see Shakti)

Bhang (Bhāṅga)
A preparation of hemp and spices, made in various ways. As a mild euphoriant it is commonly used to enhance religious/ devotional fervor, as well as to deepen philosophical and mystical insight.

Bhakti
'Devotion; adoration'–Intense and unswerving love for God, born of an understanding of His/Her nature.

Bharata-Varsha (Bhāratavarṣa)
The Indian subcontinent, derived from the name of a great ancient king who ruled it. Before king Bharata, the land was known as Haimavata-varsha ('the land of the Himalaya'), or Himanka-varsha ('the land marked by the Himalaya'). As such it comprised of the Himalayan and trans-Himalayan mountain ranges, and all the lands beneath them from Afghanistan to Burma.

Bhargava (Bhārgava)
A name commonly used for Parashurama because he was a descendant of the Vedic sage Bhrigu.

Bhava
'Existence'–a name of Shiva as the essence and protector of the life of all the worlds, the reservoir of their potentiality.

Bhavani (Bhavānī)
'The Giver of Existence'–a name of the Supreme Goddess as the Shakti of Bhava.

Brahma (Brahmā)
'The Immense Being'–The creative aspect of the triune godhead. Brahma stands for the equilibrium between the opposing centripetal (cohesion = Vishnu) and centrifugal (dispersion = Shiva) forces in the universe, allowing the possibility of existence from the union of opposites. Brahma is the source, the seed of all that is. His main attribute is the quality of rajas–activity. It manifests as a dynamic equilibrium, the revolving, space-creating, time-creating power, which is the basis of all manifestation. In his iconographic form, Brahma is represented as a bearded man in the maturity of age, with four faces. Brahma is pink or red

and has four arms. In his hands he holds the Veda, his bow Parivita, a rosary on which he counts the times of gods and humans, and a water pot (kamandalu). Brahma's vehicle is the swan, a symbol of knowledge. He rides in a chariot drawn by seven swans representing the seven worlds. He is also portrayed seated in a lotus which springs from Vishnu's navel. The lotus flower represents the earth.

Brahmana (Brāhmaṇa)

A member of the first of the four castes of Vedic (Hindu) society, generally represented by the priestly-scholarly stratum of the culture. As a group they embody the function of spiritual and intellectual authority in society.

Brihaspati (Bṛhaspati)

'The Great Master'–a grandson of Brahma, and a rishi. In order to assure themselves of victory in their battles with the asuras the gods chose him to be their teacher and preceptor. Brihaspati was able to revive the gods killed by the demons. As a reward for his thousand year worship of Shiva, Brihaspati was made the planet Jupiter. He is described in the Vedas as a shining golden colored figure with seven faces, seven rays and sharp horns. He holds a bow, arrows and a golden axe. Brihaspati's voice is like thunder. He rides a chariot called Niti-ghosha (the sound of wise rules) drawn by pale horses. In the Puranas, Brihapati has a human figure. He is dressed in a yellow robe, and looks like a rishi . In one hand Brihaspati holds a book, and a rosary in the other. Brihaspati rules the movement of the planets, and is credited with propounding the "science of light' (i.e., astrology and astronomy).

Chakora (Cakora)

A fabulous bird. It has beautiful eyes, and is said to feed on moonbeams. Also a kind of partridge.

Chandika (Caṇḍikā)
'Fierce'–a name of the Goddess as the terrifying manifestation that killed Mahisha-asura (the buffalo demon).

Chandra (Candra)
'The Luminous'–The Moon. Said to be the child of the rishi Atri and his wife Anasuya, or to be one of the treasures which came from the churning of the ocean by the gods and demons. As the presiding deity of the watery element, the Moon rules over the tides of the seas, and the store of rain water. For this reason the Moon is called the Lord of plants, which depend on water and rain, and particularly of medicinal herbs which are believed to increase in potency with the waxing of the moon. The Moon is also the Ruler of the stars and constellations. Although not generally worshipped like the Sun, the phases of the moon regulate the timings of all festivals, rituals, and fasts, making the Moon the 'Lord of the brahmanas' and their priestly activities. The Moon is a white god with a crescent on his forehead shining with cool and soothing rays. He has white garments and golden ornaments. His chariot is also white, and it is drawn by ten horses as white as jasmine. In one hand the Moon carries a mace, with the other he shows the gesture of removing fear. (Also see: Soma)

Chowrie
A ceremonial fly-whisk made of yak tail hair set in a costly decorated handle. One of the insignia of Asian royalty.

Daitya see Asura

Daksha (Dakṣa)
'Dextrous'–A son of Brahma, born from his right thumb, Daksha is the chief of the Progenitors of creation from whom all creatures, mankind included, have descended. He also represents ritual skill, the power of rites which link men with

the gods. He had twenty four daughters with his wife Prasuti, who was born from Brahma's left thumb. Among them was Sati .

Damaru (Ḍamaru)
The hourglass-shaped drum of Shiva, from which all the rhythms of creation came forth during his cosmic dance. All the sounds of the Sanskrit language are also said to have emerged from his damaru. Arranged in fourteen aphorisms, these are known as the Maheshvara Sutras.

Danava (Dānava) see: Asura

Darshan (Darśana)
'Auspicious sight'–a vision of the divine, physically or psychically. It can take the form of a reverent looking or gazing at a temple image, a holy person or place, or of an inner vision of some divinity. Also a 'way of seeing' Reality, a philosophical system.

Dharma
From the root **dhṛ**, 'to hold'–That which 'holds' everything together. Divine law. The fundamental moral and physical laws that govern the universe, society, and the individual human being. They existed before the world began and express the nature of things and beings. Acting in accordance with dharma–'righteousness'– is a primary aim in life. It is the 'virtue' of behaving in accordance with one's own fundamental qualities, of following the code of conduct which one was given by nature and birth. This code differs between sexes, it differs to some extent between the three upper castes, as well as between different age groups and professional segments of society.

Dvaraka (Dvārakā)
'The city of gates'–The fortified capital of the Yadavas, ruled by Shri Krishna, on the western coast of India (Gujarat).

Dvaraka was built by Vishvakarma, the architect of the gods, and it rivaled Indra's Amaravti in beauty. The city was submerged by the sea seven days after Shri Krishna's passing.

Ganapati (Gaṇapati)

'Leader of the Troops'–Parvati's son, also known as Ganesha. He was moulded by Parvati from the scurf of her skin mixed with the bath-paste she used. After creating him, Parvati placed Ganesha to guard at her door so that nobody, not even Shiva, would disturb her bath. Subsequently, Ganapati had his head chopped off by Shiva, when he tried to prevent Shiva from entering Parvati's apartments. On seeing his consort's sorrow over this deed, Shiva quickly cut off the head of the first living being that came along and placed it on the boy's neck. It happened to be the head of an elephant, and in this way Ganesha became the elephant-headed god. Shiva made Ganapati the lord of the troops (gana) who attend on him and Parvati. Ganesha is the remover of obstacles, and is always invoked at the beginning of any religious undertaking. His dwarfish body is pot-bellied and red in color. His ears are like winnowing baskets and he has only one tusk, having lost the other in a confrontation with Vishnu. In his four hands Ganapati holds an axe, a lotus, a banner and a sweet (laddu). He is very fond of sweets, and has an elephantine appetite. His vehicle is the shrew mouse.

Gandharva

Minor deities born of Kashyapa and his wife Arishta. Gandharvas know the secret of preparing the celestial soma. They are also expert in making medicines and aphrodisiacs. They wear fragrant garments and live on the fragrances of herbs and of still-standing waters. Their sexual prowess is limitless. In heaven, the gandharvas are the celestial singers and musicians. They play the vina and sing the most beautiful harmonies. Gandharvas are frequently shown with human torsos and a bird's or horse's head. Their wives are the apsaras. Gandharvas usually appear on earth as handsome men who are irresistibly attractive to women; hence their name is used to characterize love marriages (see below).

Gandharva marriage

One of the six types of marital unions. A marriage entered into by the man and woman of their own accord. The term is used to describe love at first sight as a result of which the woman yields to the man at once.

Gandiva (Gāṇḍīva)

The famous bow of Arjuna. This weapon was originally made by Brahma for punishing the unjust and the wicked. A very long bow, finely chiseled and shining with many colors, the Gandiva was capable of fighting 100 000 adversaries at one time, with its power increasing or decreasing according to the situation. Arjuna received it from Varuna, along with a quiver having an inexhaustible supply of arrows. With this bow Arjuna once defeated Indra. He also won many battles, including the great battle of Kurukshetra described in the *Mahabharata*.

Garuda (Garuḍa)

'The Wings of Speech'–The mount of Vishnu, half man, half eagle, the color of molten gold. Garuda is the son of Kashyapa and Vinata ('She before whom knowledge bows'), another daughter of Daksha's. When he was born, Garuda's effulgence dimmed the brilliance of all the other gods, with the exception of Agni. His power and prowess are exceptional. Even the thunderbolt of Indra only ruffles his feathers. Garuda is the implacable foe of snakes, serpents and nagas, because their mother, Kadru ('Chalice of immortality'), who was a co-wife of Kashyapa's, made by deceit Garuda's mother her slave .

Ghat (Ghāṭa)
A river embankment. A ghat can be used as a landing for boats, or as an area for bathing and washing clothes. Certain ghats may be favored for taking a holy bath; others are set aside for cremations.

Girija (Girijā)
'Mountain-born'–A name of the Goddess as Parvati.

Gotra
A patrilineal derivation of ancestral descent which usually traces its origin to a common ancestor rishi.

Govinda
'The Cow keeper'–a name of the young Shri Krishna when he lived among the cowherds of Vrindavana. Also 'rescuer of the earth', a name of Vishnu who, in his third incarnation (see: Varaha avatara) as a boar, raised the earth up from under the sea, after a demon named Hiranyaksha ('golden eye') had pushed it down under the waters.

Guna (Guṇa)
'String, strand'– A constituent factor of manifestation, of which there are three–sattva, rajas, and tamas. They pervade the whole creation, and appear in all aspects of the universe, physical as well as conceptual. The gunas never appear seperately, but exist simultaneously, although in unequal proportions, in every physical, biological, or mental phenomenon. This disequilibrium is the dynamic cause of the appearance of all phenomena. Sattva stands for purity and luminosity, rajas stands for movement and activity, and tamas stands for inertia and darkness.

Gunadhya (Guṇāḍhya)
The author of the *Brihatkatha*, written in the Pishacha dialect, and considered to be one of the precious mines of Sanskrit literature. The original work is lost, and what is known of it

today is based on existing Sanskrit translations of the *Brihaṭkatha*, dating from the fourth century AD on. The most notable of these are the *Brihatkathamanjari* of Kshemendra, and the *Kathasaritsagara* of Somadeva. The story of Gunadhya in the *Nepala-Mahatmya* is one of several versions of his legend.

Hanuman (Hanumān)
The monkey chief who helped Rama defeat Ravana. Hanuman is Shiva's son through Vayu with Anjana, the wife of the monkey king, Kesari, who lived on Mt. Meru. Hanuman is described as being as huge as a mountain and as tall as the tallest tower. His complexion is red-yellow and it glows like molten gold. Hanuman's face is red, brighter than the brightest ruby, his mane is orange-red like ashoka flowers, and his tail is enormously long. This brave devotee of Rama was blessed by the gods with more strength than Garuda, and with greater speed than Vayu. Hanuman's exploits are most famous. He was also an accomplished grammarian and musician, having once even defeated Narada in a musical competition. Above all, Hanuman is the perfect devotee.

Hara
'The Remover' (Death)–A name of Shiva as the ultimate power of destruction which removes and sweeps away all things.

Hiranyakashipu (Hiraṇyakaśipu)
'Golden robed'–A great king of the daityas and brother of Hiranyaksha (see: Govinda). Hiranyakashipu obtained a boon from Brahma not to be slain neither by man, nor beast, nor by any created being, neither by day or night, neither by a weapon that strikes, nor by one that is shot, neither on the ground nor in the air, neither inside nor outside his palace. He also was granted by Shiva rulership over the three worlds for a million years. The demon's undoing was his persecution of his own son, Prahlada, who was an ardent worshipper of

Vishnu. All of the wicked father's attempts at annihilating his religious son failed because of Vishnu's protection. Finally, Vishnu in the form of a man with a lion's head (uncreated, neither man nor beast), appeared from within a pillar at the entrance to the palace (neither inside nor outside) at twilight (neither day or night), and with his claws (neither a striking nor shooting weapon) tore the demon's entrails out, while he was seated on Narasimha's lap (neither on the ground nor in the air).

Homa

A fire ritual. A homa is a Vedic rite in which sacred articles like unbeaten rice, sesame seeds, barley seeds, fragrant woods and clarified butter are offered into a fire built according to scriptural injunctions. Homa is a way of communicating with the gods and their realm. It belongs to the ritual-sacrifice form of worship.

Hrishikesha (Hṛṣīkeśa)

'Lord of the senses'–a name of Vishnu.

Indra

The foremost of the Vedic gods. He is the great divine warrior who liberates from obstructive forces and wins all battles in favor of the gods and his worshippers. Indra is not an eternal, uncreated deity. He attained his rulership over the gods by austerities and performing great sacrifices. His reign is said to last one hundred celestial years. In one day of Brahma (kalpa) there appear fourteen Indras. Indra is a very handsome, golden-complexioned god. He wears a crown, is dressed in spotlessly dazzling clothes, and wears a garland around his neck. He consumes more soma than the other gods, and derives great vigor from it. His weapon is the thunderbolt (vajra), and his bow is the rainbow. He travels swiftly through the sky in a golden chariot, drawn by the wind. Alternately, his mount is a wonderful white elephant with four tusks, called Airavata.

Janardana (Janārdana)
'Arouser of beings'–a name of Vishnu, the god who stirs up the people, inspiring them towards purity and devotion, and who agitates the wicked through fear of punishment. Alternately, as the 'Giver of rewards', taking the form of the planets, Janardana gives to living beings the fruits of their actions.

Japa
The rhythmic repetition of mantras and prayers, either verbally or mentally. A common feature of the individual form of worship (see puja). It is usually preceded by meditation on the worshipper's chosen deity.

Jivanjivaka (Jīvañjīvaka)
A fabulous two-headed bird; one of the Kings of birds.

Kaitabha (Kaiṭabha)
Kaitabha and Madhu were two asuras born from Vishnu's earwax as he was sleeping towards the end of the period of universal dissolution. When Brahma sprung up on a lotus from Vishnu's navel and was about to commence with creation, the two demons attacked him, stealing the Vedas. Brahma awoke Vishnu, who gave chase to the two demons and slew them, thus allowing for creation to proceed. Kaitabha and Madhu's fat was used to shape the earth.

Kalasambara (Kālaśambara)
A demon who stole Pradyumna when he was six days old, and was eventually slain by him.

Kalpa
One day and night in the life of Brahma, which is said to last the equivalent of 4,320,000,000 human years. Each time the visible world is created, it remains so for one day of Brahma Then the world and everything contained therein is consumed by deluge and fire. A night of Brahma ensues. When Brahma

reawakens, a new kalpa begins, as he restores creation. This process is repeated until Brahma completes one hundred years. Then Brahma ceases to exist. He and all the gods (except for Vishnu and Shiva) and sages, and the whole universe are dissolved into their original cause. This is the period of universal dissolution (mahapralaya), when Vishnu slumbers on his serpent bed. It is followed by the birth of another Brahma, on a lotus springing up from Vishnu's navel. The current kalpa is the Varaha kalpa, the 26th day of the current month of Brahma. The universe is eternal, for the lives of 720,000,000 Brahmas are the equivalent of only one day of Rudra (Shiva).

Kalyani (Kalyāṇī)

'The Salutary One'–a name of the Goddess.

Kama (Kāma)

'Desire' – The god of Love, Beauty, and Youth, is variously said to be the son of Dharma by Shraddha, the offspring of Vishnu and Lakshmi in the forms of Krishna and Rukmini, or springing from the mind of Brahma. In the Vedas, Kama is the self-existing primal germ of mind that first arose within the One. He is portrayed as a handsome youth riding a parrot. He has two or eight arms, and holds a bow made of sugar cane, with the bowstring made of a line of bees. The shafts of Kama's arrows are made of desire. They are winged with pain and barbed with longing. Each arrow is tipped with a different flower arousing lust and passion. He travels around accompanied by his wife, Rati ('Pleasure'), the goddess of sexual passion, and is attended on by the apsaras, of whom he is the ruler, and by Vasanta ('Spring'), a cuckoo, and honey bees. His banner is red in color, with a fish on it. Kama was burned to ashes by the fire of Shiva's third eye, when, instigated by the god's who were anxious to have a son born to Shiva, capable of annihilating the great demon Taraka, he disturbed the Great God's meditation. Rati begged Shiva to restore her husband's body. Shiva promised her that Kama would be reborn as Pradyumna, the first born son of Krishna and Rukmini. He would also continue to manifest without a body, in the embrace of true love.

Kamadhenu (Kāmadhenu)

'The wish fulfilling cow'–one of the miraculous treasures which emerged from the churning of the ocean by the gods and demons. Kamadhenu was granted a boon by Brahma that she be a goddess with her own realm (Goloka) beyond the three worlds of the earth, heaven and hell. Brahma ordained that the divine cow would become the mother of all the cattle in the world, and she and her offspring would be worshipped by all the people.

Kamsa (Kaṃsa)

The powerful and wicked king of Mathura, and Krishna's maternal uncle. At the wedding of his younger sister Devaki to Vasudeva, Kamsa heard a voice from heaven predicting that he would be slain by her son. Kamsa imprisoned Devaki and Vasudeva, killing each of their infants when they were born. But the seventh and eighth children were miraculously saved from Kamsa's wrath, becoming Balarama and Krishna respectively.

Kartavirya (Kārtavīrya)

A powerful kshatriya king. Kartavirya received many boons from his divine guru Dattatreya, including 1000 arms, a golden chariot that went wherever he willed it to go, the power of restraining wrong by justice, the conquest of the entire earth and the temperament to rule it righteously, invincibility from enemies, etc. Kartavirya eventually became intoxicated with his success. He killed the rishi Jamadagni and stole the wish fulfilling cow from the sage's ashram. Prashurama, who was Jamadagni's son, cut off all of Kartavirya's arms and beheaded him with his axe.

Keshava (Keśava)
'Long haired' – an epithet of Vishnu, who as Krishna killed the horse-demon, Keshi, a follower of Kamsa's, who himself was sent to kill Krishna.

Kinnara
Celestial beings with a human body and horse's head, related to gandharvas. Kinnaras are also celestial musicians. They are attached to the court of Kubera.

Krishna (Kṛṣṇa)
'The Dark One'–The eighth incarnation of Vishnu at the end of the Dvapara yuga. Krishna is considered to be the embodiment of love, of the divine joy which destroys all pain and sorrow. Krishna appeared in Mathura as the son of Vasudeva, a noble-man of the Yadu clan, and his youngest wife Devaki. In order to avoid his uncle Kamsa's murderous designs on him, Krishna and his brother Balarama were raised among cowherds across the Yamuna river in Nandagrama, as the children of Nanda and Yashoda. His joyful games with the cowherd boys and girls at Gokula are famous. From childhood onwards, Krishna also performed many miracles and slew numerous demons. He and the Yadavas eventually migrated to the western coast of India, where they established the city of Dvaraka. In his adult life Krishna was a prime player in the great war between the Kauravas and Pandavas, described in the epic *Mahabharata*. Through his many wondrous adventures, he is treasured as the eternal child, the eternal lover, and the eternal teacher. As the eternal child he is cherished for his childish pranks; as the eternal lover he is remembered for his dalliances with the milkmaids of Vraja; as the eternal teacher he is revered for his great discourse to Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, known as the *Bhagavad Gita*. Krishna attracts everything and everyone to himself. He is usually depicted as a dark (blue) skinned youth with flowing black hair. He wears yellow garments, a peacock feather on his head, and plays a flute. Krishna is irresistible.

Kshatriya (Kṣatriya)

A member of the second of the four çastes of Vedic (Hindu) society, generally represented by the ruler, the nobility, and the warriors. As a group they embody the executive and protective functions ('law and order') of the society in both a moral and military sense.

Kubera

The half-brother of Ravana. Through severe austerities he received a boon from Brahma, and was made the god of Wealth in general, the Custodian of the gods' wealth in particular, and the Guardian of the northern direction. He is also the ruler of the yakshas. Kubera appears as an obese, pot-bellied dwarf with three legs, eight teeth, and one eye. He wears a white garment, and carries a mace. Although Kubera owns a renowned heavenly chariot (Pushpaka), he is known to also travel about in a vehicle with men yoked to it.

Kumara (Kumāra)

'The Adolescent'–a name of the son of Shiva, born of his semen ('Skanda'), and raised by six foster mothers, the Krittikas (the Pleiades), who were the wives of the seven celestial sages (sapta-rishi). For this reason he is also known as Karttikeya. This eternal youth ('Sanat Kumara'), although only a boy, possesses immense strength. At the age of seven days he killed the demon Taraka. Kumara became the god of War, and the leader of the gods' armies. He appears as an adolescent youth, fragrant and beautiful, dressed in red garments. Sometimes he is shown with one head and two arms, and sometimes with the six heads ('Shanmukha') he developed to be able to nurse from all his foster mothers at once, and with twelve arms holding many weapons. His spear, which shines brilliantly like fire, never misses its mark, and returns to his hand after killing his enemies. His mount is a peacock.

Kurma avatara (Kūrma-avatāra)
'The Tortoise'–The second incarnation of Vishnu. When in the Satya yuga, the gods were losing the war with the asuras because they had become weak due to the curse of an irascible sage named Durvasa, Vishnu advised them to churn the oceans and recover some of the treasures lost in the deluge, especially the drink of immortality (amrita). Vishnu incarnated as a giant tortoise to serve as the support for the churning stick being used, which happened to be the Mandara mountain. The gods had to enlist the help of the demons to accomplish this task, on the promise that they would share the amrita with them. Vishnu helped the gods wrest the ambrosia from the asuras by incarnating as the beautiful Mohini ('the Enchantress'), and duping them into allowing her to distribute the amrita. When the asuras' turn came, Mohini substituted another pot for the one with the ambrosia in it.

Kusha (Kuśa)
A sacred grass (Desmostachya bipinnata) used in sacrifices and rituals. Kusha is believed to be the first plant to have been created.

Lanka (Laṅkā)
An island in the ocean off the coast of Bharata-Varsha. It was created from the Trikuta peak of Mt. Meru, when it broke off and fell in the Southern Sea during a contest between Vayu and Vasuki. Lanka was originally inhabited by Kubera, but he was driven from it by Ravana and his brothers. The fabulous city of Lanka was designed and constructed by Vishvakarma, the great architect of the gods, along with Maya, the danava king who, by the grace of Brahma, became a peerless architect and builder for the gods and demons.

Madhava (Mādhava)
'Lord of Knowledge'–a name of Krishna's.

Madhusudana (Madhusūdana)
'Slayer of (the demon) Madhu'–a name of Krishna.

Maheshvara (Maheśvara)
'Great Lord'–a name applied to Shiva, and sometimes Vishnu.

Mantra
'Protects the one who thinks it'–a sacred utterance used in worship, and believed to have numinous power. Mantras are sonorous thought forms. Through the understanding of the inner significance a mantra we can realize the nature of that which it represents. Each deity is represented by a distinct mantra. Mantras are used for many purposes–attaining liberation, worship of manifest forms of divinity, communicating with deities, acquiring superhuman powers, the purification of the human body, the cure of diseases, warding off evil influences, etc.

Manu
Each day of Brahma (see: Kalpa) is divided into fourteen parts, each ruled over by a Manu. For the reign of each Manu (manvantara), which consists of 71 cycles of four Yugas, and lasts 4,320,000 human years, a different set of gods and sages, a different Indra, and different avatars appear. The human race, also, appears and disappears during the reign of one Manu. The current (seventh) Manu of this kalpa is named Vaivasvata ('Son of Brightness'), and is considered to be the offspring of Surya and one of his four wives Samjna ('Knowledge').

Marutta
Marutta was a tremendously wealthy and virtuous universal monarch ('chakravartin') of the Krita yuga (see: Yuga). He worshipped Shiva, and obtained from him plenty of gold, including a golden peak of the Himalaya. The sacrifices he performed after that became legendary. All the implements and utensils used were made of gold. The carpets and furniture

of the sacrificial hall were also made of gold. Such vast quantities of excellent food were handed out at these sacrifices, that even the gods were happy to help distribute it to the assembled masses. Indra was fully satisfied and intoxicated with the libations of soma juice. The gods were gratified with the libations of clarified butter. The brahmanas were enraptured with the magnificent donations of clothes, ornaments, and other valuables they received. Marutta's kingdom flourished for a long time. Crops were bountiful, and rains were copious. The rishis were supported by his generosity, and all his subjects were happy and fed. After a thousand years of benevolent rule, Marutta retired from the world, and was taken to heaven along with his relations and friends.

Mitra

'Friendship' A Vedic god and Lord of the Cosmic Order (rita) who embodies the virtue of comradeship and human solidarity. Along with Varuna'. Mitra rules the earth and sky, encouraging the virtuous and pious, while punishing the sinful. Mitra is the ruler of the day, and Varuna is the ruler of the night. When the worship of Vedic deities declined, Mitra was still regarded as one of the twelve forms of the sun, known as 'that friendly light rising in the day to the highest heaven'. He is said to be a sun-like god, young, handsome, sunlike, and fierce.

Mleccha

'Speaking indistinctly'–a foreigner, a non-Aryan, a mountain tribesman.

Mura

A ferocious danava. He had a boon from Brahma to be able to kill anybody he touched with his own hands in a battle, even if they be an immortal. Mura along with his 7000 sons was burnt to ashes by Krishna's Sudarshana chakra.

Naga (Nāga)

'Ever moving; serpent'–A class of semi-divine beings related to the asuras, being the offspring of Kashyapa and Kadru, another one of Daksha's daughters. Nagas have a human face surmounted by a cobra-like hood, and a long tail like a reptile. Sometimes they have three heads, sometimes seven, sometimes ten, and sometimes only one. Nagas are said to possess great intelligence and courage. They are also very handsome and wear jewels, crowns, and large earrings. The diamonds on their hoods keep their world always illuminated. Nagas belong to different tribes of different colors; some are blue, some red, and some white. They are all dangerous, quick, and violent. Although the enemies of the gods, the nagas are not unfavorable towards humans. Their females are very beautiful, and sometimes marry men (Arjuna and Ulupi). The nagas have three kings, Vasuki, Takshaka, and Shesha (see: Ananta). The principal naga realm, where they live, is the underworld of Patala. On earth nagas dwell in caves of inaccessible mountains, on river banks and in damp places. They also live under the sea.

Nandi

'The Joyful'–Shiva's mount, his door-keeper, and his chief attendant (gana). Nandi is the son of Kashyapa and Surabhi (Kamadhenu). Nandi appears mostly as a bull, white as snow, with a powerful body and soft brown eyes. Nandi is also the guardian of all four-footed animals, and a teacher of dance and music.

Narada (Nārada)

A divine sage born from Brahma's throat. Narada invented the vina (the principal stringed instrument of India) and taught music to the gandharvas and kinnaras. He is a great devotee of Vishnu, and wrote the principal treatise on devotion, the *Narada Bhakti Sutras*. Narada appears in many Puranas, sometimes as an actor, sometimes as the narrator. Cursed by

Daksha (see) to be a wanderer, Narada is welcome wherever he goes, and his freely given advice is sought after by gods, rishis and demons alike. He appears frequently to be a mischief-maker, but it is always for the good.

Narahari
Same as Narasimha.

Narasimha avatara (Nṛsiṃha-avatāra)
'The Man-Lion incarnation'–The fourth major incarnation of Vishnu. Appeared in the Satya yuga. (see: Hiranyakashipu)

Narayana (Nārāyaṇa)
'One who moves on the water'–A name of Vishnu. It alludes to that period in the cosmic cycle when the universe dissolves into its formless state (Maha-pralaya–'the Great Dissolution'), represented as an ocean of causal waters. The remnants of manifestation are represented as the serpent Shesha ('remainder'), coiled upon himself and floating on the primeval waters. Vishnu rests upon the cosmic serpent until it is time to begin a new universe.

Narayani (Nārāyaṇī)
'She who is the abode of man'–a name of the Goddess.

Parashurama (Paraśurāma)
'Rama with the axe'–The sixth major incarnation of Vishnu. Parashurama was born in the Treta yuga (see: Yuga) to the brahmana sage Jamadagni and his wife Renuka. He incarnated to correct the imbalance in the social order which had been disturbed by the unbridled power of the kshatriya kings, and to reestablish the principle of a monarchy restrained by a priestly caste guided by the principles of Sanatana Dharma. After avenging his father's death by slaying the arrogant king Kartavirya and his sons, Parashurama fought twenty one campaigns clearing the earth completely of the kshatriya kings and warriors. (The present

day warrior caste is said to descend from the kshatriya women widowed by Parashurama who were subsequently impregnated by brahmanas.) After fulfilling his mission, Parashurama performed a great sacrifice during which he gave away all his wealth and the lands he had conquered to brahmanas. He then retired to the Mahendra mountain (the Eastern Ghats) and did penance. Parashurama is depicted as a powerful man carrying an axe in his right hand and pointing with his left. His head is crowned with matted hair, and his body is decorated with many ornaments. Prashurama's color is red and he wears white clothing.

Patala (Pātāla)
The nether worlds in general, of which there are seven. The last of the nether regions of the world. These are inhabited by daityas, danavas, yakshas, and other beings. Patala is inhabited by the nagas. According to the rishi Narada who visited there, Patala is a place of luxury and sensual delights, in some ways more beautiful than Indra's heaven. Although these regions are thought to be beneath the earth, the sun shines on them in the daytime, and the moon lights up their night. There is neither heat nor cold in Patala. The soil there is the color of gold. The nagas reside there in marvelous palaces designed by the great architect and artificer of the asuras, Maya. Enjoying all sorts of luxuries and pleasures, they live contentedly in Patala, not feeling the passage of time. At the base of Patala dwells the thousand-hooded Ananta, who carries the earth on his head like a crown, waiting until it is time for creation to be dissolved again.

Pinaka (Pināka)
The bow of Shiva. It is made of a rainbow-colored serpent with seven heads with poisonous fangs. The arrow used in the bow is called Pashupata. It is bright like the sun and burns everything it touches with the fire of death. Even Brahma and Vishnu are not immune from this ultimate weapon.

Pinda (Piṇḍa)
A ball made of unbroken rice or wheat flour mixed with, or cooked in cow's milk, and offered ritually to the Pitris. The pindas are intended to nourish the deceased, and assist in the formation of a body which the spirit may occupy.

Pishacha (Piśāca)
A people in ancient Bharata (India) who fought on the side of the Pandavas in the great Mahabharata war. Also a race of flesh-eating spirits, the most vicious creatures on earth.

Pitha (Piṭha)
'Seat'–Places sanctified by a part of Sati's body having fallen to earth there. A residence of the Great Goddess.

Pitri (Pitṛ)
'Father'–The first Pitris were sons of Brahma, born from his side. The sons of the first created gods, who had to teach their own fathers the rites of expiation, penance and humility when they had neglected to worship Brahma, also became Pitris. The first progenitors of the human race are also Pitris, as well as the spirits of departed ancestors burned or buried with proper rites. Each class of beings is transformed into a special class of Pitris after death. Yama, the God of the Dead is the ruler of the Pitris.

Prahlada (Prahlāda)
A daitya king. Although the son of Hiranyakashipu and the father of Mahabali (see: Banasura), both of whom were terrible demons who had to be vanquished by Vishnu, Prahlada himself was a pious daitya and a great devotee of Vishnu. After his father's death he ruled the daityas in Patala for a while, but was soon raised to the status of Indra for life. Prahlada was ultimately united with Vishnu.

Prithu (Pṛthu)

The first anointed king, a royal rishi and dharma monarch. Before his time the surface of the earth was too rough and uneven for civilized habitation. People were living like animals, on fruits, leaves, and roots. Prithu milked the Earth like a cow, forcing her to feed humanity and yield her treasures. The king had the ground from the Himalaya to Kanya Kumari (Cape Comorin) leveled. He then made the first well to be dug out, and introduced the art of agriculture along with the use of food grains to mankind. King Prithu is also credited with the discovery of the properties of medicinal plants.

Puja (Pūjā)

'Worship, homage'–Individual worship (puja) is one of the two main forms of ritual action in relationship to the gods, the other being ritual sacrifice (yajna). Its purpose is to establish an intimate, psychic relationship between the worshipper and the deity. Puja is usually performed to the image of a deity, either at the worshipper's home, in a temple, or in some favorable natural setting, like a confluence, source, tirtha (see), or other sacred place. In it the worshipper, after having bathed, purified and consecrated his or her body, invokes the deity, receives it, praises it, entertains it, makes offerings to it, beseeches the god's blessings, etc., treating the image of the deity like a noble and honored guest in every way. Each element and action in the ritual has a symbolic meaning on which the performer is supposed to concentrate their thoughts.

Pujari (Pūjārī)

A temple priest. He performs a puja in the prescribed manner to a deity, morning and evening, daily.

Pulaha
A great rishi. Born from Brahma's navel, he is one of the Lord Progenitors of creation (Prajapatis) from whom lions, tigers, butterflies, lambs, wolves, yakshas, and others descend.

Pulastya
A great rishi born from the ear of Brahma, and one of the Lord Progenitors of creation (Prajapatis) from whom monkeys, yakshas and rakshasas descend. Pulastya was the grandfather of Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Kubera.

Pushpaka (Puṣpaka)
A marvelous aerial chariot created by Vishvakarma, the divine architect. When his daughter Samjna who was married to the sun (Surya) complained about her husband's terrible heat, Vishvakarma tried to unsuccessfully reduce the sun's brilliance by rubbing him on a grindstone. From the leftover particles of the sun Vishvakarma made Vishnu's sudarshana chakra, Shiva's trident (trishula), Skanda's spear (shakti), and the Pushpaka chariot which he gave to Brahma. The Pushpaka, which is drawn by geese/swans (hamsa), can travel as 'swift as thought'. Brahma bestowed the chariot on Kubera, who lost it to his half-brother Ravana. After Ravana's defeat the Pushpaka was returned to Kubera by Rama.

Rajasuya (Rājasūya)
'Royal consecration'–An elaborate Vedic ceremony stretching over a period of more than two years. It served to install a monarch, quicken his royal energy, or establish his status as a king of kings.

Raksha (Rakṣa) see: Asura.

Rakshasa (Rākṣasa) see: Asura.

Rama (Rāma)
'The Charming One'–The seventh incarnation of Vishnu

appeared at the end of the Treta yuga (see: Yuga). Rama is considered to be the perfect man, cultured and just. He is the embodiment of righteousness. His life and exploits are described by Valmiki in the first Sanskrit epic, the *Ramayana.* Rama appeared in Ayodhya as the eldest son of king Dasharatha, a great ruler of the Solar dynasty, and his eldest queen Kaushalya. At the time of his consecration as the heir-apparent, Rama was exiled to the forest for fourteen years due to the machinations of Dasharatha's junior queen, Kaikeyi, who wanted her son, Bharatha, to become the heir to Dasharatha. Rama was accompanied in exile by his brother Lakshmana, and his wife Sita. While in the forest Sita was abducted to Lanka by the demon-king Ravana. Rama mounted an expedition to rescue Sita, accompanied by Lakshmana, Hanuman, and other great warriors, and a big army composed mostly of monkeys and bears. They were actually the incarnations of minor deities helping Vishnu in his world-saving task. In the drama of Vishnu's incarnation as Rama, Hanuman is considered to be an incarnation of Shiva, and Sita is an incarnation of Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu. Lakshmana is considered to be an incarnation of Ananta . Rama's merciful killing of Ravana fulfilled the main purpose of his mission on earth. Thus Vishnu incarnated as Rama at the end of the Treta Yuga, and established a golden rule of justice and happiness, called 'Rama-rajya'. Rama is shown as a very gentle, and always smiling, young prince holding a bow in his hand and carrying a quiver on his shoulder. His color is dark-blue, he is clad in yellow clothes. While in his forest exile, Rama wore his hair tied in a knot. He is usually portrayed flanked by Sita on his right, and Lakshmana on his left. They are both the color of pale gold. Sita is dressed in a sari, her hair is also tied in a knot, and she holds a lotus in her hand. Lakshmana holds a bow in his hand with some arrows. Hanuman, in constant attendance of Rama, stands in a reverential attitude, or kneels a little in front and to the right of Rama.

Rambha (Rambhā)
One of the most beautiful of the apsaras. The daughter of Kashyapa and his wife Pradha. Rambha is said to be one of the treasures that emerged from the churning of the ocean (see: Kurma avatara) as the embodiment of female beauty.

Raurava hell
One of the twenty-eight hell regions ruled by Yama. Raurava is the hell into which those who have persecuted other living beings are cast. It is a fearsome fiery place where the wrongdoer's feet are burned off again and again. Those whom they had persecuted or cheated while on earth assume the shape of a kind of dreadful serpent called 'ruru' (from whence the name of this hell comes), and torment them.

Ravana (Rāvaṇa)
'The Roarer'–The ten-headed rakshasa king of Lanka. Ravana was the son of Visravas with his wife Nikasha. Ravana practiced extreme austerities at Gokarna, sitting in the middle of four fires, with the fifth fire being the blazing sun. After every 10 000 years, he cut off one of his heads and offered it into the fire. When he was about to sever his last head, Brahma intervened and granted the demon a boon. Ravana requested not be killed by gods, demons, gandharvas, yakshas, and so on, but he was to proud to ask for invulnerability from men. Even for a rakshasa Ravana attained an extreme degree of wickedness. Ravana was an immense demon, massive like a mountain and dark as a storm cloud. With his ten heads, twenty arms, copper-colored eyes and a huge mouth full of glistening fangs he looked like the god of death with an open mouth. His strength was so great that he could agitate the seas and split mountains. Ravana broke every law of dharma, drove Indra out of heaven, killed and tortured many rishis, raping their wives and daughters. Even the wives of his own relations were not safe from him. The curses of his victims, and his own oversight when requesting a boon resulted in Vishnu incarnating himself as a man, Rama, and killing Ravana.

Rishi (Ṛṣi)
'Seer'–a mystic sage. The first rishis were born from the mind of Brahma, just like the universal laws, which they perceive. Subsequently, rishis have been born to all classes of people living in Bharata (India). The rishis are the founders and disseminators of the eternal law-religion-custom of the Aryans (see: Sanatana Dharma).

Rudra
'The Roarer'–a name of Shiva.

Rudraksha (Rudrākṣa)
'Eye of Rudra'–The seed of a tree (Elaeocarpus sphaericus) used for rosaries.

Rukmini (Rukminī)
An incarnation of Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu. The daughter of king Bhishmaka of Vidarbha. She fell in love with Krishna, but was prevented from marrying him by her brother. Finally Krishna abducted her and took her to Dvaraka where Rukmini became his wife and principal queen. She gave him ten sons, including Pradyumna.

Samkhya (Sāṅkhya)
'The science of the numerable'–One of the Sanatana Dharma's oldest 'ways of seeing' (darshana) Reality. Propounded by the sage Kapila, the Samkhya is a system which aims at discerning the primordial constituents of the macrocosm and the patterns and relationships between them.

Samyamani (Samyāmanī)
'City of Bondage' – The city of Yama . Yama's subterranean capital is a splendid large city full of mansions, golden spires, and beautiful rows of buildings. Several unsullied rivers flow through it, and there are lotus ponds, sacred tree groves, and sumptuous pleasure gardens in many places. Samyamani itself is inhabited by Yama's associates, by celestials such as gandharvas, apsaras, kinnaras, and also by men and women,

who on account of their past deeds have been granted a paradisiacal existence for a period of time. In the center of the city there is a very high golden fort, where the god of Death himself resides. Samyamani also contains Yama's jeweled judgement hall, known as the Hall of Destiny (Kalachi). There, Yama sits upon his Throne of Deliberation (Vichara-bhu). After leaving the body, the souls of the dead are led by Yama's messengers through a barren land without shade or water, until they reach the city of Yama, which they enter alone, accompanied only by their deeds. Divine beings, sages, and others like them, who have vast stocks of merit, enter Samyamani through its shining northern gate. Ordinary human beings, who have acquired some merit enter through the eastern gate, which looks like an archway of autumnal clouds. The terrible southern gate, made of red-hot iron, is for all sinners and killers, while the jagged western gate, made of Udumbara fig wood, is for those who commit bad and prohibited deeds. In the judgement hall, Yama's record-keeper, Chitragupta ('Knower of many secrets') reads from his records an account of the dead person's actions. His fate is decided on by an assembly of sages and saints, who are free from anger, desire and attachment, and who consider all matters from the universal viewpoint of dharma, without doubt, fear, or favour. The deceased is then led to receive his sentence before the throne of Yama, who appears gracious to the just, and fearful to the wicked. Finally the souls are sent to various realms of punishment or reward, according to their actions. The realms of punishment are generally underground in darkness.

Sanatana Dharma (Sanātana dharma)
'The eternal law'–The universal laws that govern matter and life, as revealed to the rishis and taught by them. The Sanatana Dharma is a perpetually renewed system of knowledge, which guides the individual and humanity towards living in harmony with the natural laws of the universe, and evolving towards union with the Supreme Spirit.

Sati (Satī)

'Faithfulness'–The incarnation of the Supreme Goddess, who as the youngest daughter of Daksha and Prasuti married Shiva. But her father disapproved of his son-in-law's life-style–wearing serpents around his arms, and skulls for a necklace, getting stoned on bhang, and indulging in revelries in graveyards and cremation grounds, being attended on by troops of imps and goblins. When Daksha organized a grand sacrifice to which all the divinities except Shiva were invited, Sati was incensed at the insult shown to her husband and herself, and so she immolated herself in the sacrificial fire. Shiva had Daksha's sacrifice destroyed. He then came there, and picked up Sati's charred body and roamed around the universe lamenting her loss. The gods, fearful that Shiva might destroy the whole world in his grief, persuaded Vishnu to cut off pieces of Sati's body with the Sudarshana chakra as Shiva passed them, thus making the body gradually disappear, and Shiva forget his bereavement. Wherever a part of Sati's body fell, that place became a centre of pilgrimage known as a seat of the Goddess (shaktipitha). The Great Goddess was born anew as Parvati, the daughter of Himalaya, and married Shiva again.

Satyabhama (Satyabhāmā)

The daughter of the Yadava king Satrajit. She was given to Krishna by her father in gratitude for restoring to him the Syamantaka gem. This wonderful gem was given as a keepsake to Satrajit by Surya, with whom he was friends. When worshipped properly by brahmanas, the Syamantaka would yield eight loads of gold daily. Satyabhama married Krishna and became one of his four principal queens at Dvaraka. She induced Krishna to fight with Indra and carry away for her from Amaravati the wish-fulfilling Parijata tree.

Shakti (Śakti)
'Energy'–a name of the Supreme Goddess. The energy that arises from the opposing cosmic tendencies of cohesion (Vishnu), disintegration (Shiva), and the dynamic equilibrium between them (Brahma) is the power of manifestation. Being the creative power of divinity, inseparable from it, this power through which creation arises is conceived of as the female 'consort' of Shiva.

Shambhu (Śambhu)
'The Abode of Joy'–a name of Shiva.

Shankara (Śaṃkara)
'The Giver of joy'–a name of Shiva.

Sharva (Śarva)
'The Archer' A name of Shiva. His bow is the Pinaka.

Shastra (Śāstra)
A religious teaching or treatise. These texts belong to a class of scriptures called smriti ('that which is remembered'). Unlike the shruti ('that which is heard'), they are not deemed to be revealed scripture like the Vedas and other sacred lore, which was 'seen' and transmitted by the rishi-seers. Also, a branch of knowledge, science, or technology.

Shiva (Śiva)
'The Auspicious One'–As the destructive aspect of the triune godhead, Shiva stands for the centrifugal force which makes the universe expand (disintegrate), synonymous with the principle of time. Absolute time is the first condition for the existence of the universe. The universal power of destruction is that in which all existence ends. Shiva, being both of these, alone remains in the beginning and at the end of everything. His main attribute is the quality of tamas–darkness and disintegration. Shiva is represented symbolically as a lingam. 'Lingam' means the distinctive sign through which it is

possible to recognize the nature of something. Shiva's lingam is a phallus, symbolizing the totality of procreative power found in the whole universe. It stands in a yoni, the iconic representation of the female genital organ, which symbolizes the power of manifestation. Anthropomorphically Shiva is shown as a beautiful, three-eyed god, with the crescent moon on his left forehead. The river Ganga falls from the crown of his matted hair. His arms are smooth and strong, like the trunk of an elephant. In two of his hands he holds a trident, symbolizing the three qualities of Nature–sattva, rajas and tamas–and a damaru. His other two hands show the gestures (mudra) of granting boons and removing fear. Shiva's body is smeared with ashes. He is adorned with shining armlets, and carries garlands of rudrakshas, snakes, and skulls around his neck. Shiva is draped with a tiger skin, or an elephant hide. He rides a bull, as white as the Himalayan peaks, called Nandi ('joyful'), usually in the company of his spouse, Parvati, the daughter of Himalaya.

Shivaa (Śivā)
'The Auspicious Goddess'–a name of the Supreme Goddess.

Shudra (Śūdra)
A member of the fourth caste of Vedic (Hindu) society, consisting mostly of laborers and artisans. As a group they embody the manufacturing and technical functions of the society.

Shukra (Śukra)
'The Bright One'–Shukra was the son of the rishi Bhrigu who was born from Brahma's skin. Out of antipathy towards Brihaspati, Shukra agreed to become the guru of the asuras. He was a great adept at the use of mantras (casting spells). He even knew an incantation for reviving the dead (Sanjivani-vidya). But he was tricked into teaching it to Brihaspati's son, who became Shukra's disciple. Shukra is also considered

to be inventor of political science, having composed the most famous code of behavior and politics, called the Shukra-niti. Shukra is shown holding in one hand a book, and a treasure in the other. His complexion is fair, and he rides a silver chariot drawn by eight horses. In the visible world the guru of the anti-gods appears as the planet Venus.

Siddha
'The Realized'–Yogis who having attained liberation in the body (jivan-mukti) are transformed into semi-divine beings. They are said to number 88 000, and dwell in the region between the earth and the sun, as well as in the northern reaches of the Himalaya.

Skanda
'Spurt'–The son of Shiva, conceived without female participation. Skanda was born from Shiva's sperm, which fell on the ground when the gods interrupted Shiva and Parvati's prolonged lovemaking, in order to request Shiva to produce a son soon who would be able to slay the terrible Taraka demon. See: Kumara.

Soma
'Cup of Offering'–A name of the Moon. As a product of the churning of the ocean from which the elixir of immortality (soma) also arose, the Moon is closely associated with soma. The Moon is the chalice of immortality from which the Progenitors and gods drink the divine ambrosia (amrita) which is ever refilled. Soma is also the juice of a certain creeper, which the Vedic Aryans prepared and used as a psychedelic sacrament in many of their rituals.

Sudarshana chakra (Sudarśana cakra)
'The Beautiful to see Discus'–Vishnu's attribute, and a most formidable weapon. Created by Vishvakarma from the particles of the sun's effulgence (see: Pushpaka). The Sudarshana chakra has the form of a rapidly revolving wheel

with six spokes. It has a very sharp jagged edge which is capable of even cutting off the heads of mountain-size demons. It also flares with sparks and flames and can cast bolts of lightening when discharged, so it can burn an entire city to the ground. The discus always returns to Vishnu's finger after accomplishing its task When Vishnu is not carrying it with him, the Sudarshana chakra dwells in the sky.

Surya (Sūrya)
'The Luminous'–The Sun, and one of the main Vedic deities. In the Puranas he is described as the son of Kashyapa (Vision) and Aditi (Primordial-vastness), the progenitors of all the gods. Surya is the father of Yama and his twin sister Yami (the river Yamuna), and of two of the Manus of this Kalpa – Vaivasvata and Savarni. He is portrayed as being of dwarfish stature, with a body like burnished copper, reddish eyes, a golden beard, and golden hair. All of him shines brightly, even the tips of his fingernails. He wears golden bracelets, earrings, and a diadem which illuminates all the quarters of heaven. The Sun is said to dress in the Central Asian style, wearing boots and a tunic He rides a one-wheeled golden chariot drawn sometimes by seven horses, and sometimes by a horse with seven heads. His charioteer is the deity of the dawn (Aruna, 'the Red One') who is more beautiful than the Moon, and whose strong body shields the world from the Sun's fury.

Tapas. Tapasya (Tapasyā)
'Heating up'–One of the forms of primordial energy, like Kama ('desire') to which it is opposed. Tapas is the inner energy of spiritual fervor or ardor. As the unflagging, unsparing effort in the achievement of higher things, tapas is seen as a mighty power from which spring all great things. Tapas is a source of power. Gods and sages attained their exalted status, and performed noble deeds through the power

of tapas. Tapas, in the sense of practicing austerities and disciplines, is also a means of obtaining or increasing one's power, be it spiritual or material. The practice of austerities is of three kinds–physical, verbal, and mental. Physical tapas include ritual observances and modes of behavior which purify the mind, as well as the observance of various kinds of restraints and rules leading to the bearing of hardships, like fasting, living without shelter or in water, exposing oneself to the extremes of the elements, and other forms of penance used for the sake of controlling the mind and senses. Verbal tapas includes speaking without passion words which are useful, truth-speaking under all circumstances, the practice of not speaking (mouna), etc. Mental tapas include such practices as maintaining inner silence, the cultivation of gladness of mind, and concentration on the Self (Atman).

Tapasvi (Tapasvī)
'One who performs tapas'–an ascetic who seeks purification through the rigorous practice of Yoga, religious austerities, and disciplines.

Tirtha (Tīrtha)
'A crossing, ford'–A place of pilgrimage which gives easy access to divine realms of reality. At a tirtha, the pilgrim has the opportunity of communicating more effectively and directly with the divine. The extraordinary power of the tirtha enhances greatly the results of all religious acts performed there. In some cases the very act of having performed the pilgrimage (yatra) to a tirtha replaces the performance of other rites and sacrifices. Tirthas have been associated particularly with bodies of water–riverbanks, their headwaters and confluences, pools, ponds, springs, and seashores–but a forest or a grove, a mountain, a hilltop or even an outcropping of rock, a city, town or a village may, according, to tradition be considered a tirtha. People go on pilgrimage to a tirtha for various reasons: to obtain religious merit, to get rid of sin, to

have some worldly desire fulfilled, for the performance of certain customary practices, for spiritual practice, to obtain higher knowledge, peace of mind, or liberation.

Ugrasena

A noble king of Mathura and father of Kamsa. Ugrasena had a beautiful wife with whom a gandharva named Dramila fell in love. Once, when Ugrasena was away, this gandharva took the king's form and approached the queen while she was strolling in the garden with her companions. When the queen became aware of his deceit, she cursed the gandharva to go to hell. But Dramila raped her. She subsequently also cursed her son Kamsa, who was born of this union, that he would be killed by Ugrasena's kin. Kamsa deposed Ugrasena and imprisoned him. Only after Kamsa's death did Krishna restore Ugrasena as the ruler of Mathura.

Vaikuntha (Vaikuṇṭha)

'Land of no hindrance'–The sphere (loka) or heaven of Vishnu, a realm without fear. Built of gold and precious stones on the northern slopes of Mt. Meru, Vaikuntha is eternal.

Vaishya (Vaiśya)

A member of the third caste of Vedic (Hindu) society, generally composed of farmers and merchants. As a group they embody the economic, commercial and financial function of the society, be it agricultural or urban in character.

Vajapeya (Vājapeya)

'Drink of strength'–An acclaimed Vedic sacrifice performed for the purpose of attaining overlordship and victory (in the case of kshatriyas), or great eminence as a learned man (in the case of brahmanas). This complicated and costly rite, lasting 17 or 21 days, included several unique features like offering libations of wine (sura) in addition to the usual offerings of soma, and a race of seventeen chariots. A king, after performing this sacrifice was expected to perform the Ashvamedha sacrifice to confirm the overlordship he had attained.

Vajra

The thunderbolt weapon of Indra. It was made by the celestial smith Tvashtri from the bones of the seer Dadhichi. This weapon which surpasses all others is said to be shaped like a mace. It shoots thunderbolts and is very hard. With it Indra can cleave mountains and knock off the heads of the mightiest demons. Even Kumara and Garuda were each once wounded, be it only slightly, by the vajra of Indra.

Valmiki (Vālmīki)

The rishi who 'saw' the *Ramayana* and transmitted it to mankind. As the author of that work, he is credited with being the first poet and creator of epic poetry in popular Sanskrit. Valmiki is said to be the tenth son of Varuna. Abandoned by his parents he came under the influence of wicked companions, and ended up living as a forest dweller, hunting animals and robbing travelers. His name then was Ratnakara. Under the influence of the seven celestial sages (sapta-rishi), whom he had also tried to rob, Valmiki regretted his bad conduct. He sat under a tree chanting 'Mara, Mara' (the mantra 'Rama' backwards) which the seven rishis had imparted him. Valmiki became so engrossed in the repetition of this mantra, that he did not notice a white anthill grow around him. After a long time the seven rishis returned and extracted Valmiki from the anthill. He became known thereafter as Valmiki ('the one who came out of a white anthill'). Valmiki was a contemporary of Rama. Valmiki was transported to heaven for some time, where he had a vision of the great story of Rama. After returning to earth he settled on the bank of the Tamasa river, where he composed the *Ramayana*.

Varaha avatara (Varāha-avatāra)
'The Boar incarnation'–The third major incarnation of Vishnu. In the Satya yuga, the carrying forth of creation was impeded by the fact that a fierce demon named Hiranyaksha had pushed the earth under the waters. The first Manu Svayambhuva, obtained a boon from the Great Goddess, granting him permission to create. When he requested his father Brahma to provide him with a place where he could create, a young boar named Emusha came out of Brahma's nostril. He quickly grew and became an enormous black boar with a hundred arms. This boar killed Hiranyaksha and raised the earth from the bottom of the ocean with his snout.

Varuna (Varuṇa)
As a Vedic god, Varuna is one of the Lords of the Cosmic Order (rita), along with Mitra, Agni, and Indra. Usually mentioned jointly with Mitra, these complementary deities represent the comradeship of men, and the favour of the gods. Varuna was also the surveyor of the moral conduct of men. Nothing escaped his notice, in heaven and on earth. In the ensuing period, when the importance of many of the Vedic gods declined, Varuna became the Guardian of the western direction, the Overlord of the primordial waters, and the Ruler of the waters of the world. Varuna is portrayed as a white man, holding a noose, and riding a fabulous sea monster, the makara. He dwells in the heart of the ocean.

Vasuki (Vāsuki)
One of the three Naga kings. Vasuki is the eldest son of Kashyapa and Kadru. Dwelling in Patala, Vasuki is one of the seven nagas that hold up the earth. When he moves, there are earthquakes. During the churning of the oceans (see: Kurma avatara), this great serpent was used by the gods as the rope coiled around the churning rod, which was the Mandara mountain.

Vayu (Vāyu)

Born from the breath of the Cosmic Man (Purusha), Vayu is the Vedic god of Wind, and the messenger of the gods. He is also the leader of the gandharvas, and the Guardian of the north-western direction. Vayu is mostly invisible, but the sound of his shining chariot, drawn by upto a thousand purple steeds, depending on the wind's velocity, can be heard. He is sometimes portrayed as a white or sky-blue man, riding a deer. He is very handsome. He carries a white flag in one hand, and a fan in the other, while his remaining two hands are held out in the gestures of protection, and boon granting.

Veda

'Knowledge'–The authoritative revealed scripture(s) of the Aryan religion. The Veda, being the very breath of the Supreme Spirit, is considered to be without a beginning (anadi), and of non-human (apaurusheya) origin. The Vedic mantras emanate from the cosmic energy of the all pervading Supreme Consciousness to be apprehended ('seen') by the seer-rishis, and then communicated by them to humanity. Each kalpa has its own version of the Veda. Vishnu incarnated in the last Dvapara Yuga (see: Yuga) as the sage Vyasa. He performed severe austerities on Mt. Meru, aimed at propitiating Shiva. Pleased with his penance and devotion, Shiva appeared before Vyasa and granted him the boon that with his help the Veda be propagated anew, for the dissemination of Dharma and the welfare of human beings. In order to facilitate this, Vyasa subsequently divided the Vedic revelation into four divisions, which he taught to his four principle disciples–Paila, Jaimini, Vaishampayana, and Sumanta. From these transmissions arose the quartet of Vedas known today as the Rig, Yajus, Sama, and Atharva Vedas respectively.

Vedanga (Vedāṅga)
'Organs of the Veda'–Ancillary texts propounded by rishis in order to facilitate the study, understanding, and application of the Vedas. These are: Shiksha–the science of phonetics and pronunciation assuring an error-free method of chanted transmission of the text; Vyakarana–the science of grammar necessary for understanding the language of the Veda; Chandas–the study of prosody and the metric composition necessary for preserving and verifying the form of Vedic mantras; Nirukta–etymology or the study of the history and meaning of the words used in the scripture; Jyotisha–the science of astronomy used in ascertaining the proper times for performing Vedic rituals; Kalpa–the methodology of performing Vedic rites and ceremonies.

Vidyadhara (Vidyādhara)
'Bearers of Wisdom'–Very beautiful aerial spirits, who resemble human beings, but can change their form at will. Vidyadharas have magic powers, and are usually benevolent. They frequently intermarry with humans. The Vidyadharas live in the mountains north of Kailasha. They are usually depicted carrying flower garlands symbolizing victory. It is also said of them that they shower a rain of flowers on warriors who fight with courage for a noble cause.

Vishnu (Viṣṇu)
The sustaining aspect of the triune godhead. His name means 'the Pervader'. He stands for the centripetal force which holds the universe together, synonymous with the continuity of existence and life. Vishnu is that light which pervades Creation in all directions. His main attribute is the quality of sattva–lightness and luminosity. In his iconographic form, Vishnu is represented as a very attractive, dark-skinned god, clad in a thin yellow dhoti. He has four arms representing dominion over the four directions of space as absolute power. They also represent the four aims of life, which result in the

division of human life into four periods, of the Hindu society into four castes, and of history into four ages (yugas). Vishnu's four arms also stand for the four Vedas. In his hands, Vishnu holds a discus, symbol of the ignorance destroying power of the mind; a lotus, symbol of eternity, purity and the unfolding Universe; a conch representing the origin of existence, the primeval sound from which creation coiled forth; and a mace, signifying the power of knowledge, and the notion of individual existence. Vishnu's mount, called Garuda, is a fabulous golden bird, half vulture, half human.

Vishvanatha (Viśvanātha)

'Lord of the Universe'–A name of Shiva; particularly of the celebrated lingam at Kashi (Varanasi).

Vishvamitra (Viśvāmitra)

'Friend of all'–A celebrated sage, who was born a kshatriya, but by the dint of his intense austerities became a brahmana, and one of the seven great sages (sapta- rishi). Vishvamitra is credited with the authorship of the hymns of the third mandala of the Rig Veda, which contain the sacred Gayatri mantra. Vishvamitra's exploits are featured in many puranic stories. His rivalry with the brahmana sage, Vashishtha, is legendary.

Vishveshvara (Viśveśvara)

Same as Vishvanatha

Yadava (Yādava)

The descendants of Yadu. The renowned clan (mentioned in the Rig Veda) in which Lord Krishna was born. At that time they led a pastoral life at Vraja. They moved with Krishna to Dvaraka, where they had a kingdom. Most of the Yadavas perished soon after Krishna's passing. A few of them survived the cataclysm. Until recently, some royal and princely houses in India claimed their descent from them.

Yadu

The son of king Yayati of the Lunar race and his queen Devayani. Yadu refused to take on his father's premature old age which was the result of a curse by the sage Shukra. Yayati, in turn, cursed his son that his descendants would not enjoy kingship. Most of them perished in the sinking of Dvaraka.

Yaksha (Yakṣa)

Semi-divine beings born of Kashyapa and his wife Muni. Although related to rakshas (see: Asura), yakshas are generally considered to be benign. They can assume any form, including that of seductive enchantresses, and they are known to occasionally play impish tricks on humans. In the divine realms, they are Kubera's attendants. On earth, yakshas are the protectors of its treasures. There is a widespread belief that a yaksha inhabits the common sacred tree of a village, and protects it, insuring fertility to its fields, and prosperity to the village's inhabitants.

Yama

'The Restrainer'–The brother of Manu, Yama was the first human to die and discover the way to the other world. In this way he became the guide of the dead to the mansions of light in the realm of the Progenitors. He eventually became elevated to the role of the ruler and judge of the dead, and the lord of the infernal regions. Yama is a huge man, dark like a mountain of soot. He has a greenish complexion, and red eyes. He wears the glittering crown of a monarch, and blood-red garments. In one hand he holds a noose to catch his victims, in the other, an iron club for punishment. The God of Death usually rides a black buffalo, and is accompanied by a pack of ferocious dogs.

Yoga

'Union'–One of the Sanatana Dharma's principal 'ways of seeing' (darshana), or approaches to knowing Reality. Yoga is an experimental process, which uses control of the body, breath, mind, senses, inner faculties, and their integration, as a method of attaining the highest forms of realization. Since the techniques of Yoga are based on the infinite variations of human nature, Yoga and its disciplines can be found in all religions. As a natural way of attaining the previously unattainable, Yoga is, whether consciously recognized or not, responsible for the achievements of the great artist, musician, statesman, scientist, and mystic.

Yogi (Yogī)

An exponent or practitioner of Yoga.

Yojana

'Yoking'–The distance traversed in one harnessing, or without unyoking. Approximately nine miles.

Yuga (Krita, Treta, Dvapara, Kali)

Cyclical periods of four different ages occurring in the life of the world. The reign of one Manu, is divided into 71.42 cycles of four yugas, each lasting 12,000 divine years, or 4,320,000 human years (1 divine year = 360 human years). Each yuga in the cycle is shorter than the previous one. Each is preceded by a 'dawn' period and a 'twilight' period, which lasts one tenth of the duration of the yuga it belongs to. An incarnation of Vishnu usually completes a yuga, paves the way for the next one, and personifies its ideals. Some of the characteristics of each yuga are:

Krita Yuga–'the age of accomplishment', or Satya Yuga 'the age of truth'–Its duration is 4000 divine years. The Krita Yuga is the age of perfection and wisdom. The operation of dharma is full and complete. There is no unrighteousness or sin. All people perform their duty without envy, or any thought of reward. Everybody worships Brahma, and obeys one law. There is only one Veda. Tapas (austerities) is the principal dharma practice, and the principal mode of worship is dhyana (meditation). Man's life-span is 400 years.

Treta Yuga–'the age of the three ritual fires'–Its duration is 3000 divine years. This is the age when sacrificial rites were initiated. The operation of dharma is reduced by a quarter. Men act with the thought of reward for their rites and charitable deeds. The main god being worshipped is Yajna ('Sacrifice'), and the main practice is jnana (knowledge of Self). The principal means of worship is yajna (sacrificial rites). Man lives for 300 years.

Dvapara Yuga–'the age of doubt'–Its duration is 2000 divine years. In this age dharma declines by another quarter. People are half-good and half-bad. Very few men adhere completely to dharma. The Veda is divided into four. Some men study only a part of it, and some don't even study the scriptures at all. Conflicting philosophies are born. Because of the decline in morality, diseases, desires and calamities start befalling humanity. In this age, the main dharma practice is yajna (sacrificial cult) and the most prevalent mode of worship is puja. Vishnu is the most widely worshipped deity. The human life-span declines to 200.

Kali Yuga–'the age of conflict'–Its duration is 1000 divine years. This is the current age, being the 28th recurrence of the Kali Yuga in the 7th Manvantara (see: Manu) of the Varaha Kalpa (see: Kalpa). The Kali Yuga is characterized by a further decline in moral standards. Only one quarter of dharma remains. Practices enjoined by the Vedas, acts of righteousness, and sacrificial rites have all but ceased. People neglect their duties and their religion. They become weak in body and mind. There is much anger, fatigue, and frustration. Diseases and calamities assail the people. Hunger and fear prevail. In this age, the most potent dharma practice is dana (charity). The principal mode of worship is devotional chanting (samkirtana) and the repetition of God's name (nama-japa). The god most worshipped in this age is Shiva. The human life-span stands at 100.

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How I Got a Life from the Nepala-Mahatmya

William Forbes

I had a life, but I nearly lost it in a trekking accident in December1985. I came out of this accident with my right leg broken in several places, and a fortuitous–I would say–concussion. The leg took about three years to heal. The concussion took about a year, maybe more. After the first six months of my convalescence, I was confronted with the prospect that I might be virtually bedridden for a long time, maybe forever. At that time my concussion was in a phase where I had very little sense of time and scant short-term memory. I had also become very empathetic, verging on psychic/visionary I resolved to do something to start moving about, and to get my mind moving, too, I decided to study Sanskrit. I always had some interest in Sanskrit, being a Yoga teacher and an admirer of ancient Indian culture, but had never done much about it. Now I enrolled at the Vishvabhasha Campus of Tribhuvan University, and began my studies under the late Prof. Sarasvati Prasad Ghimere. I eventually completed the course. At the same time, Prof. Ghimere began coming to my home, and teaching me from another introductory book, which I preferred to the one being used on campus.

After nearly completing that book, in the spring of 1988 I had a meeting with Dr. Theodore Riccardi Jr. of Columbia University, an eminent Sanskrit and Nepali scholar, here on a visit. I told him about how I had been studying, and asked him to recommend a Sanskrit text I might use to practice translation on. Dr. Riccardi recommended the *Nepala-Mahatmya* and the *Himavatkhanda*. He told me that they had a lot of relevance to Nepal, and I might find them interesting. He also said that they had never been translated into English. I had never heard of these books, but Prof. Ghimere had, and since both of them were out of print, he managed to get Xerox copies of the two books from some friend's library.

We started by translating chapters 7 and 8 from the *Himavatkhanda*. (I subsequently retranslated them with Shri V.K. Chaube. They appear in this book as its first two chapters, *How the Himalaya Became Holy*, and *How Human Beings Discovered the Wonderful Powers of the Himalaya*.) This whetted my appetite. The stories were original, and I had never heard them before. I knew that the mountains north of the Kathmandu Valley were none other than 'the holy Himalayas', I had gotten in the habit of gazing at their beautiful color changes at sunset, whenever I was here and the season was right. I had also trekked, and gone on some well known yatras in these mountains, like to Amarnath, Kedarnath, Gosaikunda, and Muktinath. Earlier in 1985, my wife Susan Burns and I had been fortunate to be in one of the first groups of foreigners allowed to visit holy Mt. Kailash, after the Chinese authorities opened Western Tibet to tourism.

I believed in holy mountains. Before moving to Nepal, Susan and I had spent a number of years in South India, living in Tiruvannamalai, at the foot of a mountain called Arunachala, which in my experience is the holiest of them all, because it made such a profound impression on my consciousness. The Himalayas were widely called 'holy', even mountain climbers sometimes acknowledged it in the titles of their books, but nobody seemed to know the how or why of it. Now, with this translation I had found some explanation, although not a 'scientific' one, of the unusual presence that the Himalayas seemed to possess as they loomed on the horizon. It also seemed to give me a more concrete notion of their influence on me since I had moved to this beautiful valley in their lap.

Prof. Ghimere and I began translating the *Nepala-Mahatmya*. During the week, I would try to decipher the text and its meaning, using a dictionary and my meager knowledge of Sanskrit. On Saturdays, Prof. Ghimere would appear and correct my work, retranslating passages where I had gone completely astray, which was often enough. It was a very slow and painstaking effort for me, requiring a lot of concentration. From those words and phrases, rather simple by Sanskrit standards, slowly would emerge charming stories I'd never known, about the valley I was living in, about its sacred places and shrines.

I could not find much reference to these stories in the various guidebooks and books about 'the legends of Nepal'–the usual fare that is offered to tourists and visitors here. There was only scant mention of them even in scholarly books about Kathmandu Valley, like Mary Slusser's *Nepal Mandala*. I was amazed, because here were accounts describing events which led to the recognition of holy places, and to the establishment of so many temples and shrines all around the Valley, and nobody seemed to deem them very important or interesting. The guidebooks seemed to assume that foreign tourists were mostly interested in historical facts about the shrine, and its architectural details, such as where to view the erotic carvings on the struts, and so on. The reason why a temple was established there in the first place was not important, somehow. There were some Nepali people who seemed to know about a few of the legends of the places, but not in detail. "Oh yes," they would say, "I read that when I was a child. It was in the *Mahendra Mala* (the basic Nepali school textbook), maybe.

Prof. Ghimere and I translated in this manner the first four chapters of the *Nepala-Mahatmya*. But towards the end of 1989 my teacher's health deteriorated and he couldn't continue working with me. I kept translating on my own, occasionally consulting a stray Sanskrit scholar, but that was a very unsatisfactory state of affairs. I was fascinated by what I had found out in the first few chapters of the *Nepala-Mahatmya*, and wanted to find out more. I also wanted to continue learning Sanskrit. I needed a teacher.

In the beginning of 1990 I began rehearsing a play at the Hotel Vajra in Bijeshwari. This highly artistic hotel has a laudable tradition of staging one play every year, under the direction of its formidable manager, Ms. Sabine Lehman. The cast is mostly recruited from the employees of the hotel, many of whom are involved in Nepali dance and music performance, as well. I had enjoyed many of their theatrical productions over the years. I joined the play essentially because I thought that it would give me a lot of varied and strenuous exercise, which I felt would help the healing of my leg. Participating in the play gave me much more than that. It gave me some very nice friendships with the other cast members, it gave me a very interesting acting experience under the guidance of someone utterly committed to, and highly inspired by Thespis, it even gave me an opportunity to practice Sanskrit chanting, which I had learned from my Yoga-Acharya, Shri T. K. V. Desikachar of Chennai (Madras). Even more than that, the play gave me a new Sanskrit teacher.

One of the members of the cast was Swami Dharma Jyoti, the librarian at the Vajra. I told him about my problem with finding a Sanskrit teacher. Swamiji had a nephew, he said, who was an MA in Sanskrit, maybe he could help me. It took a while for this to happen. 1990 was a very heady time in recent Nepali history. The People's Movement was in full swing just when we were rehearsing the play. In April of that year, democracy was reestablished in the Himalayan Kingdom. When things simmered down a bit, Swamiji's nephew arrived in Kathmandu. He was a young man in his thirties, Vijay Kumar Chaube, by name. Shri Chaubeji turned out to be the ideal teacher and collaborator for the task I was to become involved in. Without his enthusiasm, perseverance, diligence and piety this book would have never seen the light of day. He has contributed to this project tremendously, not only in working with the translation, but also in all the research that went into finding the places mentioned in the book, and exploring them. At every step he has contributed the virtues of his Brahminical heritage to the work. This book would not be complete without them. But all that was yet to come. In the meantime we continued with the translation of the *Nepala-Mahatmya*. By 1992 we had almost finished it.

Around that time, I persuaded Ms. Lehman to use a part of our translation of the *Mahatmya* (Chapters 2-4) for a play. In the spring of 1992 it was staged under the title *Chandeshwori*. In it, I played the narrator, Rishi Markandeya. The play was a great success, and the audiences had many more Nepali people in them than usually at the Vajra theater. The script of the play, written by Sabine and her close collaborator Ludmilla Hungerhuber, was subsequently translated into Nepali by the well-known writer, Khagendra Sangraula, and published in the literary journal of the Royal Academy.

After completing the translation work on the *Nepala-Mahatmya*, I turned to some other texts, but the attraction of its enchantment was never far from my mind. I became very interested in finding out where all the sacred places mentioned in the Mahatmya were, and visiting them. Some were well known and pretty easy to locate. Helga Uebach's translation of the *Mahatmya* (see Bibliography) contained an index of place names, offering some locations of the sites. In true scholarly fashion, Ms. Uebach had researched the locations of the various places, finding them in earlier works, like Sylvain Levi and Percival Landon's accounts of their respective visits to Nepal at the turn of the century and in the 1920's. It did not sound as if she had visited any of these places herself, except on the pages of another manuscript or book. Mary Slusser's monumental cultural study of the Kathmandu Valley (See Bibliography) also provided the location of a few more places from the *Mahatmya*. Her focus, though was to a great extent on Newari culture, to which the *Nepala-Mahatmya* is of peripheral importance. By then, Dr. Jayaraj Acharya's English translation of the *Mahatmya* had appeared. It also had a glossary which included place names.

Here again, some of the places were identified, while others were only given very approximate locations based on their appearance in the text of the *Mahatmya* itself. I had met Dr. Acharya once when he returned from America after the reintroduction of democracy, and was working in the Prime Minister's office. Again, it was Prof. Riccardi who had made me aware of this scholar's work, and I had a very interesting conversation with Dr. Acharya about the text of the *Mahatmya* and his translation of it. It would have been nice to have continued our acquaintance, but Dr. Acharya at that time was being called to serve his country as ambassador to the U. N., and matters of state were to command his attention for a long time thereafter.

Fortunately for me, there were people living in this Valley who had 'hands-on' experience of the places mentioned in the *Nepala-Mahatmya*, and I am deeply grateful to each of them for their help. Foremost among them was Yogi Naraharinath, ascetic, scholar, translator, historian, activist, organizer of ritual sacrifices for world peace, and more. I had first met him through Prof. Ghimere. When in Kathmandu, and not busy pouring ten million oblations (koti homa) into the sacrificial fire, the Yogi was visitable at the Gorakshnath temple on Mrigasthali Hill. I met him there, and Shri Chaube interviewed him several times. Yogi Naraharinath seemed possessed of an encyclopedic mind, and he knew just about everything about everything as far as the *Himavatkhanda* and *Nepala-Mahatmya* were concerned. He knew the location of nearly every place, and had no hesitation about identifying them. Sometimes it was a bit difficult verifying his assertions in the field. Overall though, he was a very thorough and authoritative source of information.

Dr. Govinda Tandan was another eminent scholar who helped me in my search for the sacred places of the *Mahatmya*. Although a very busy man, working tirelessly with the Pashupati Area Development Trust for the preservation of the environs of Pashupati and its traditions, and for the Hindu Dharma in general, he very kindly took interest in my project, and was most helpful in identifying certain sites around Pashupatinath. Dr. Tandan also introduced Shri Chaube and myself to the Tirtha-guru of Pashupatinath, Shri Padma Prasad Bhatta. We were very fortunate in meeting this gentleman in the summer of 1996, only a few months before he died. Shri Bhatta took us on a yatra/tour of the entire Pashupati area, and pointed out most of the tirthas and kundas mentioned in the *Nepala-Mahatmya*. Since a lot of these sites don't really exist anymore, or they appear seasonally at best, we had to take the Tirtha-guru at his word. Again, he was a very authoritative person on the subject, and he also had a large hand-written book, inherited from his father, which he consulted when in any doubt.

Lastly but not leastly, my dear friend Keith Dowman, eminent Buddhist scholar and guide to the power places of Tibet, was working on a book meant to be a thorough survey of the power places of Kathmandu Valley. A small portion of this work appeared subsequently in Keith's book *The Power Places of Kathmandu Valley*, but most of it has, unfortunately, never been published. Keith was very kind to avail me of his entire database on the power places of the Valley, most of which he had visited and documented. It was he, for instance, who told me where the "secret" Somalinga (See: Chapter 8) was located.

Finding out over the years where things were was only intended to facilitate going there, and visiting the shrine or 'power place'. Beginning in the autumn of 1992, and over the next couple of years, I began visiting the sacred places of the Mahatmya. In the beginning, this exploration took the form of weekend excursions with friends. These outings were a real eye-opener for all of us. Who were we? Some were long time foreign residents of Kathmandu Valley, others would be some of the Nepali actors from the Vajra theater (life-time residents of the Valley), still others might be people from Lincoln School, where my wife works. We all had some marvelous experiences finding and visiting these places. Some of them, of course, many of us may have visited before. But there were so many spots nobody had ever been to. Finding them was an adventure, and visiting them a unique experience. Although these places were still technically in Kathmandu Valley, on the edge of it perhaps, walking to them was like going back in time, and visiting the Kathmandu Valley that was, not so long ago, and also very long ago. Although we would be only a short distance from the Ring Road, it often felt as if we were trekking in some simple and remote area far from the bustling crowds of the capital city.

Many of the shrines themselves, had a very special charm about them. The people there were also very kind and helpful to us, pointing out features of the site we may have missed. I can't say that every place was like that, but there were many memorable ones. I can recall one walk to Ashapureshvara via Kusha Devi during the rice harvest season, which was so enchanting that everybody in the group was nearly ecstatic with the beauty of the scenery and the joyousness of the land. Another wonderful experience was finding Bharabhuteshvara, and exploring the cave there. Visiting the Indreshvara at Dahacok Hill, and enjoying the view of the mountains and Valley from its top was also an inspiring experience. A picnic in the sacred grove surrounding Vajravarahi, or in the vicinity of the Sundari Mai shrine, unfailingly offered refreshment to body and mind.

There were many such experiences. Most of these visits we conducted as day trips. But it is quite possible to string a few of them together and make a mini-trek out of them. For example, a three-day trek can be planned based on the stories of Changu-Narayan and Chandeshvari. Starting at Changu-Narayan, one can walk to Valmikishvara and then to Chandeshvari. Sleep overnight in Banepa, either camping, or in a hotel, the next day proceed to Dhaneshvara, then walk up to Dhulikhel and visit Gokhureshvara, and then descend to Panauti and visit the Niramati/Roshamati confluence and

Indreshvara. After staying overnight in or near Panauti, one can walk on to Ashapureshvara, and from there get back to the Ring Road via Bainsipatti. Or one could add another day to the trek by walking from Ashapuri to Doleshvara, and then to Surya-Vinayaka. Or stretch it by not descending to Panauti on the second day, but spending the night in a nice lodge in Dhulikhel. Likewise, from Valmikishvara one can walk up to Nagarkot, spend the night there, and walk to Banepa the next day, visiting the Trichampaka Pond along the way. The map included with this book is intended to help in planning such excursions.

After having visited most of the places individually, in the spring of 1994, Susan and I, along with Shri Chaube, performed the circumambulation of the Valley as set down by Bhringi (Chapter 9). We hired a trekking company, and walked as much as possible (we sometimes hitched short rides, and did not walk all the way to Pandukeshvara, for instance). We did not follow the sequence of shrines and tirthas in Bhringi's scheme exactly, but we did go to all of them, with the exception of Chaturvaktreshvara, because we did not know its whereabouts then, and Karunikeshvara, because its location is uncertain. However, once we left our home we did not return to it until we had gone the complete circle, starting and terminating at Pashupatinath. Shri Chaube performed appropriate pujas wherever we went.

This was another extraordinary experience. It took us almost two weeks to complete the parikrama. The *Nepala-Mahatmya* outlines it in only five days. How the ancients performed it in such a short time, without roads or hitching rides, is something to be marveled at. After having performed the parikrama, we asked Yogi Naraharinath if he knew about other people performing it, to which he replied that some had, but not in recent memory. Tirtha-guru Shri Padma Prasad Bhatta subsequently told us that he, himself, had not performed it, as no pilgrim had ever requested a parikrama of the holy region with him.

These experiences of visiting the shrines and performing the circumambulation were so special and unique, that I naturally began to wonder why more people, especially visitors, did not partake of the bounteous pilgrim's feast that this blessed Valley offers. I could see that they are missing out on wonderful opportunities, which can benefit them, and enrich their experience in many ways. I also wondered why, when tourists went to some of these temples and shrines, they were not told the beautiful stories about how these places became sacred, about the events that caused them to be enshrined in consciousness. From that crystallized the idea of this book. For the last 3-4 years Shri Chaube and I have been devoting most of our energies towards shaping it. It involved retranslating some portions of the text, as well as translating some additional chapters from the *Himavatkhanda* and other works, which we used to enhance the text. For instance, the story of Pashupati, in its present form consists to a large extent of material from the *Himavatkhanda* (Chapters 76-78, and 80-83).

Then this is how I got a life from the *Nepala-Mahatmya*. Even if I didn't actually get a life, the *Nepala-Mahatmya* has enriched my life in so many ways. It even got me to produce a book. I don't really feel I 'authored' this book. I feel that I was impelled by Arunachala-Shiva, the mountain, to present His mountain father-in-law, Himalaya, with this work, in order to refresh peoples' memory as to what is going on here, and to turn more people on to the rare character of the Valley. I hope that this book will fulfill that purpose. I hope it will inspire people to visit and experience these shrines and power places, carrying with them a vision of the Puranic panorama of events that made this Valley the very special place it has been for centuries, and still is. I hope that the sites will benefit from the visitors. And that the visitors, alongside the standard benefits of taking a marvelous walk in the beautiful countryside, partake of the subtle benefits of tirtha-yatra. It's all in God's hands, and yours.

This book and this adventure would not have been possible without the active participation of so many friends. Those who went on the excursions with us include Pam Ross, Andrea Abinanti, Danny Birch, Julie Joslin, Judith Chase, Jim Danish, Prajol Bajracharya, Sandeep Neupane, Mangal Man Maharjan, Poorna Maharjan, Rameshwor Maharjan, and others. Many friends read the manuscript at various stages, and offered valuable comments. John Frederick was generous with his proofreading expertise. I thank them all for their participation.

Raju Babu Shakya (Sarab) has been involved in this project for several years, and I am most grateful to him for adorning the book with such beautiful illustrations. Sarab is a fine artist, very versatile and prolific. I am beholden to him for his patience and perserverance, and for not being the proverbial temperamental artist. Without inspired illustrations, this book would lose much of its charm, and Raju Babu has been a godsend to it.

I did lot of the research for this book at the Olcott Memorial Library and Research Center of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Chennai (Madras). I would like to thank Norma Shastry for facilitating my stay there, and the staff of the Library for their cooperative spirit.

Last but not least I thank my wife, Susan Burns, without whose constant love and support nothing would be possible. "If not for you, Babe, if not for you…"

Swayambhu
Saraswati Puja
Vasant Panchami
February 10, 2000

Summation

By Vijay Kumar Chaube

वर्णानामर्थसंघानां रसानां छन्दसामपि ।
मङ्गलानां च कर्तारौ वन्दे वाणीविनायकौ ॥
मात्रे नमः । पित्रे नमः । गुरवे नमः ।

(I laud the Mother Goddess Sarasvati and Shri Ganesha, who are the creators of the sounds, of the clusters of meanings, of the poetic sentiments, of the metres, and of the felicities. Obeisance to the mother. Obeisance to the father. Obeisance to the teacher.)

A Pauranic text called the *Nepala-Mahatmya* is the main source of this book. The colophon of the *Nepala-Mahatmya* declares it to be a part of the *Skanda Purana*. The *Skanda Purana* is a jewel of a composition in the Pauranic literature of the Sanskrit language, and the Sanskrit language is the root-language of the religion and culture of the Aryan people. Therefore, I feel it to be my duty to make the readers aware, briefly and pithily, of Aryan culture, the Sanskrit language, Pauranic literature, and of the *Skanda Purana*.

The Vedic culture, which, most of the people call the Aryan culture, is one of the oldest and greatest cultures of the world. Scholars from East and West alike, laud without hesitation its greatness and various aspects. A great Western thinker, Moriz Winternitz said, "If we wish to learn the beginnings of our own culture, if we wish to understand the Indo-European culture, we must go to India where the oldest literature of an Indo-European people is preserved."

The foundation of Vedic culture is to accept the Supreme Spirit as the all-pervading, all-powerful all-instigating controller of the whole universe. He creates this whole universe, He sustains it, and a day will come when all this will disappear in Him–this is its firm assumption. The Vedanta literature declares Him to be without a beginning, without an end, changeless, and perpetual. Whenever in this world there is a decline of righteousness and a growth of wrongdoing, that imperceptible and inconceivable Supreme Soul assumes an embodied form to reestablish righteousness and punish the wrongdoers. All His acts become ideals for the people of the world.

The Sanatana Dharma attaches great importance to simple living and high thinking in human life. Renunciation in one's life is very important here. It suggests that enjoyment of worldly things should always be based on self-restraint. The Aryan people who are devoted to their religion, always underline the transitory nature of worldly pleasures. They fix the achievement of spiritual knowledge as the chief goal of their life.

Aryan culture lays great stress on non-violence, and presents the principle of live and let other beings live, too. It suggests to perceive every creature as our friend. In this way it wants to develop the sense of coexistence in the world. It wishes "all creatures to be happy, all of them to be healthy, all to experience well-being, and that none should feel sorrow", so expresses this verse –

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः, सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।
सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु, मा कश्चिद् दुःखभाग्भवेत् ॥

Physical and mental purity has great significance in this culture. Austerity and meditation are said to be the source of all kinds of super-human powers in it, and are seen as essential for human upliftment. Japa (the repetition of divine names) and yoga have a special importance in this way of life. It inspires one to proceed on the path of one's duty, being always devoted to one's parents and teachers.

This culture prescribes sixteen kinds of consecrations (samskara) during one's life. It suggests that one act so as to be released from the three kinds of debts that everyone carries– to one's ancestors, to the sages, and to the Gods. Here, human life is divided into four stages. They are that of a student, a householder, a renunciant, and of an ascetic. Here, four goals in one's life are enjoined to be achieved. These are righteousness, prosperity, pleasure, and liberation. The social system in this culture is based on the division of all the affairs among the four major castes of the society. They are the Brahmana, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, and the Shudra.

The pure form of Sanatana Dharma is found in the Vedic literature. To obtain the proper knowledge of the religious and cultural views and assumptions of the Aryans one will have to go deep into the ancient Sanskrit scriptures. Historical and archeological investigations have found that the religion and culture of the Aryan people have greatly influenced the life and culture of many countries of the world. Not only in all the temples, holy bathing places, and shrines of cultural India, but also in all of the social and family celebrations, like investiture with the sacred thread, the marriage ceremony, and so on, Sanskrit is the language of all ritual performances. This ancient language has great influence over the social and practical life of this region even today. Even a common man without any education has in mind a few Sanskrit verses and aphorisms. These aphorisms are very influential in common conversation.

Sanskrit is called the language of the gods. The Rig Veda, recited in Vedic Sanskrit language, which came into existence around 6000 BC, is the first known composition in any language of the human race. From that time on, the stream of Sanskrit literature has been flowing ceaselessly until now. Because of its wonderful powers of subsistence, and numerous currents of profound thoughts, Sanskrit literature is undoubtedly incomparable in the world. All the four goals of human life mentioned above are elaborately described here. It comprises all the branches of good literature. The form of art and depiction of beauty available in Sanskrit literature, have been highly praised by both the Eastern and Western scholars. In brief, one can find here all that a good literature by its elaborate form can impart. The treasure of words in Sanskrit is very large and there is a unique convenience of forming suitable words here for describing various scenes, conditions, contexts, emotions, feelings, and sentiments. Besides all this, the system of word pronunciation in Sanskrit is also very scientific and easy. The basic ancient texts of many popular subjects like Yoga, Tantra, Ayurveda, Jyotisha, etc., are found only in this language.

The Puranas are extensive holy texts presenting the glory of ancient Bharata-Varsha. These are ancient compositions supplementary to the Vedas, which explain the thoughts and assumptions, preachings and prayers, and the principles and theories already expressed in Vedic literature. These creations have firm faith in the Almighty assuming many forms for the welfare of humanity. The incarnations of Gods have been completely described in these sacred works. The contribution of the Puranas is immense for granting the Sanatana Dharma a glorious form. Therefore, for comprehending the ancient Aryan's culture, a critical survey of the Pauranic texts is quite necessary. It is truly said that a Brahman (a saintly and priestly person) without the knowledge of the Puranas cannot be considered wise.

The aim of the Puranas is not only to narrate the story of a particular character, dynasty, or a deity. Rather, they give an account of the great events from the beginning of creation till its total dissolution. While describing different dynasties, they sketch the characters of only those kings and rulers, whose characters are worthy of emulation, or establish some kind of model. Even today we do not have any better means than the Puranas for peeping into the large periods of the remote past to know the wonderful happenings.

Because of its vastness and profoundness of thoughts, the Vedic literature has been moving away from the common people with the passage of time, while the Puranas, because of their practical and easy language, and interesting story-telling style, are close to us even today, so says this verse –

वेदार्थादधिकं मन्ये पुराणार्थं वरानने ।
वेदा प्रतिष्ठिताः सर्वे पुराणे नात्र संशयः ॥
(नारदीय पु. २.२४.१७)

[The Vedas (Vedic principles) are established in all the Puranas, without a doubt. But O lovely-faced one, I prefer the expressions of the Puranas to those of the Vedas.] (Naradiya Purana 2.24.17)

For ages, they have been successful in bringing to the heart of the common people, in the easiest way, the abstruse elements of spirituality and Sanatana Dharma. The Puranas are the only means accessible to all for knowledge of the religious beliefs, moral assumptions, festivals and celebrations, ways of worship, and the pantheon of Gods of the Aryan people. These are the famous compositions, responsible for the prevalence of devotion to the Gods among the people. They describe in detail the four major castes of Hindu society, and the four stages of human life, which are based on old religious texts. The Puranas are considered to be the most successful works in presenting a living picture of the social life of the ancient Aryan people. We also find a detailed description of the ancient geographical situation of the subcontinent in the Puranas, which is very useful and informative for us. A thorough critical investigation of the contents of all the Puranas is still to be done. For any such investigation, proper understanding of the special styles of expression found in the Puranas is essential.

There is no dispute about the *Skanda Purana*, which resembles the well-known great epic, the *Mahabharata*, in size, being a Maha-Purana. In the traditional list of the Puranas, the *Skanda Purana* appears in the thirteenth position, but according to size it would be apt to place it in the first position. In accordance with an old belief, the events of the present *Skanda Purana* took place in the Tat-Purusha Kalpa. In the beginning, the following rishis received and protected it in order–Skanda (the Six-headed God)–Bhrigu–Angiras–Chyavana–Richika, and so on. It is said that this Purana was popular among all the four major castes of the society. This Maha-Purana is divided into seven khandas (major sections). They are the *Maheshvara Khanda, Vaishnava Khanda, Brahma Khanda, Kashi Khanda, Avantya Khanda, Nagara Khanda,* and the *Prabhasa Khanda*. In the *Skanda Purana*, counted among the Shaiva Puranas, the Shaiva aspect is mainly presented by Shiva's son and the commander of the Gods' army, Skanda. Therefore, Maharshi Vyasa named this Purana the *Skanda Purana*. In spite of its very big size, the standard of the literature found in it is considered to be high.

This Purana is basically different from the other Puranas. It is considered to be the treasure of the religious, cultural, social, philosophical, historical, geographical, and political information regarding ancient Bharata-Varsha. An important factor about it is this, that it describes almost all the regions of ancient India. One can find here a big collection of the Mahatmyas (glories) of the various regions of ancient Aryavarta. In the *Kedar Mahatmya* and *Badarika-Ashrama Mahatmya* one can find a lovely description of the beautiful regions of the Himalaya, in detail. Considering the difference in the structure and style of the description, it can be said without hesitation, that they are not the work of a single man.

While describing a particular place of worship, they give its location, legend, the condition at that time, and also its distance from some well known place quite accurately. Paying attention to these factors, it is clear that those authors were fully aware of their respective regions. Here it is noteworthy, that since the authors of these Mahatmyas were not a single man, so any criticism in respect of a particular Mahatmya cannot be applicable as a criticism of the whole *Skanda Purana*.

The only Hindu country in the world, Nepal, is the name of a beautiful country situated in the lovely mountain ranges of the Himalaya. The high mountain tops covered with snow, with green and dense forests and groves, the rivers and springs of clean and fresh water, and the peace-loving people repeatedly attract the people of the world to visit this country. The meaningful name of a mythological region, Nepal, can be seen mentioned in the volumes of several great works of Sanskrit, like the *Mahabharata*, the treatises of Ayurveda, and the smritis. The name means 'the land governed by Ne(mi)', who was an illustrious sage. According to the legend of this land, Lord Pashupatinath Himself made this glorious muni the chief of this region to govern the land-

नेमे त्वमस्य क्षेत्रस्य मुनीनामग्रणीर्भव ।
पालनीयं त्वया क्षेत्रं वचनाम्मे तपोधन ॥

(O Nemi, may you become the chief of this holy region. Govern this land at my command, O treasure of austerities.)
NM.11.60

The old Aryan scriptures call the Himalaya the abode of the gods. Nepal was founded in the lap of this mountain, and was ruled over for a long time by a glorious Sanatanist sage. Therefore, anyone visiting this region can easily experience the influence of the Vedic dharma on the social structure of this land. The world today recognizes Nepal as a country having the highest mountaintop of the world, Mt. Everest, and as the birthplace of Lord Gautam Buddha. But those who have a good understanding of this land, consider it as one of the greatest regions, deeply connected with Sanatana Dharma and culture. Not only the sources of the many sacred rivers like the Bagmati, the Narayani, the Koshi, etc. are in this land, but the birthplace of the World Mother, Sita, the spouse of Shri Rama, revered by all Hindus, is in the Terai of Nepal, at Janakpur. Not only famous mythological holy places of the Hindus, like Pashupati Sthan, Muktinath Dham, Devaghat, Varaha-kshetra are situated here, but distinguished Bana-lingas are found in lake Gosainkunda, and the celebrated Shaligrams are found in the Gandaki River in this land. Realizing the great religious value of Nepal, the first Shankaracharya, in his so short lifetime, also visited this holy region Such is the holy land of Nepal where in olden days, till the time of King Divodasa, the gods used to play freely, and were visible to common people during the daytime in some regions.

Tantric practices are very effective in Nepal. They are mainly based on the use of mystical formulas, precious gems, and herbal medicines. Many rare texts on tantra shastra are kept safe at several places here. Even the flights of wooden stairs in the old palaces here are mostly constructed according to tantric injunctions.

The use of mystical formulas (mantras) is very common in the society here. Nepalese people deeply believe in them. The Lakshmi mantra, the Sarasvati mantra, the Nila-Sarasvati mantra, the Kali mantra, etc., are some famous mantras widely used in this region. Nepali tantrics perform the Mantra-siddhi (a ritual which makes a mantra effective for someone using it) usually at the time of Dasain, Tihar, Vasanta Panchami, Shivaratri, and Krishnashthami. There are big collections of gems and precious stones in Nepal, and Nepali scholars know well their effect and how to use them. What to say about the medicinal herbs and plants found in Nepal? Actually, the forests and groves here are full of these gifts of nature, though their proper use for the benefit of the human race is still to be realized.

The *Nepala-Mahatmya* is an ancient text, presenting the mythological story regarding the establishment of a society entirely based on Vedic dharma and culture, in the spacious and lovely Nepal (Kathmandu) Valley in the middle of the Himalaya. Its study grants a solid background for comprehending the religious and cultural beliefs and assumptions of mythological Nepal. The very interesting and knowledge-increasing stories included in this work, not only enhance a person's religious beliefs, but also explain several aspects of Vedic culture. The *Nepala-Mahatmya*, describing the origin, greatness, and the ways of worship of most of the gods and goddesses situated in the Nepal of that time, has been influencing the religious-minded Nepali people for centuries. In fact, this text has been increasing religious belief in Nepali people, and inspiring them to perform their religious duties with zeal for centuries, preserving their ancient culture. Considering the detailed, factual, and minute description of Nepal Valley presented in the *Nepala-Mahatmya*, one can believe that this text was composed in this very land, and its poet was a scholar having a good knowledge of this region. The mountains, the rivers, the confluences of the rivers, the religious spots, the gods and goddesses described in this composition are almost all still found here, which indicates the same fact. The oldest manuscript of *Nepala-Mahatmya* was found in the Darbar Library in Kathmandu. This event also confirms the above statement.

Beginning the *Nepala-Mahatmya* in similar fashion as the other Puranas, and claiming it to be a part of the *Skanda Purana*, appears to be prompted by its poet's intention of acquiring religious and social recognition for his work. On account of which circumstances the *Nepala-Mahatmya* could not be included in the present *Skanda Purana* is a subject for research. The *Nepala-Mahatmya* claims to be a part of the *Himavatkhanda* also, and looking at the subject matter of the *Himavatkhanda*, this seems quite plausible. But the absence of a *Nepala-Mahatmya* in the *Himavatkhanda* found in Nepal itself, and the difference of style and language in these two works, indicates that they are separate compositions, each claiming to be components of the *Skanda Purana* for recognition.

The *Nepala-Mahatmya* is a text mainly related to religion and culture. Its language is easy and fluent, based on the conversational style. Nowhere one feels irksomeness or monotony reading it. More or less all the literary sentiments and feelings are found in it, but since the background of this work is religious, the main aspect of it is devotion to the gods and goddesses. The major portion of the text is related to devotion to the Great God, Shiva, but the other Godhead, Vishnu, has also been given proper importance here.

The *Nepala-Mahatmya* can be taken as a text completely denying the sectarian division in the Vedic tradition. The threads of sectarian tolerance existing in Nepali society can be easily found in this text. Some examples from the *Nepala-Mahatmya* can be presented in this context. Lord Buddha performed severe austerities on the summit of the Manidhatu Mountain, and pleased Goddess Parvati. He obtained the boon of his heart's desire from the Goddess. At the request of the Mother Goddess, Lord Buddha, as a Shaivite, established a Shivalinga called Karunikeshvara at the confluence of the Vagmati and Manimati rivers. (N. M. 1.57-66) Similarly Shri Krishna (Vishnu), going to Devapattana had a reverent gaze upon the Great God Pashupati and the Mother Goddess. In the prescribed manner, He performed the worship and the circumambulation of Pashupati, and the repetition of Shiva's name near Pashupati

(N. M. 11.42,43). With great devotion to Shiva, He established four Shivalingas called Gokarneshvara, Gopaleshvara, Kileshvara, and Svarneshvara. The unity of Shiva and Vishnu has been even more clearly expressed by the great sage Nemi. He says that he who sees Shiva in the form of Vishnu is a true Shaivite, and he who sees Vishnu in the form of Shiva is a true Vaishnava. (N. M. 11.52) "Those who create difference in these two are hypocrites, are contrary to the Vedic assumptions, and will go to hell", so says this verse –

हरौ हरे च ये भेदं कुर्वन्ति मनुजाधमाः ।
पाखण्डिनो वेदबाह्यस्ते वै निरयगामिनः ॥
(ने. मा. ११. ५३)

In this way the *Nepala-Mahatmya* can be mentioned as a work creating peace and unity among the Hindus.

There are nine chapters in this mythological guidebook. In these chapters, interesting, inspiring and informative religious stories are described. The appropriate illustrations done by Shri Raju Babu Shakya have made these stories even more interesting. I earnestly praise Shri Shakya for his patience, tolerance, and labor while making them. Among these nine chapters, the main base of the first three chapters is the *Himavatkhanda*, and of the rest, the *Nepala-Mahatmya*. The language of these stories is practical and easy. Therefore, though these stories are close to the texts, still, those people who don't know much about this region and about the Vedic religion and culture, will not feel any difficulty in comprehending them.

Because of several reasons, in the present context I have not discussed the time when the *Nepala-Mahatmya* and the *Himavatkhanda* were written. I hope by the grace of Lord Pashupatinath, I shall discuss this subject in the coming editions of this book.

From my student days, I have been taking great interest in translating a complete Sanskrit text into some modern language. Therefore I was very pleased, when I got the occcasion in November 1990, to work on the translation of the *Nepala-Mahatmya* with Mr. W. P. Forbes. Within a period of almost two and a half years, I guided him through the translation of all the thirty chapters of the *Nepala-Mahatmya*. During this period, my excellent student went on comprehending the text according to my explanations, and improving the English of the translation. In this way the translation of the text was completed by the spring of 1993. After that, we continued our translation work, taking in hand some small texts like the *Ramana-Lahari*, the *Paniniya-Siksha,* and a few other ones. While translating the *Nepala-Mahatmya*, the desire to see the present condition of the sacred spots described in the text, frequently arose in us. It was fulfilled in 1994, when along with Mr. & Mrs. Forbes we went out to circumambulate this holy Valley, as described in the twenty ninth chapter of the *Mahatmaya*, itself. Within nearly two weeks we were able to visit most of the important holy places of this Valley enumerated in the text. Sometime in 1995, the idea of preparing a book based on our translation of the *Nepala-Mahatmya* arose. Then, we became busy revising our old translation, and doing some supplementary ones from the *Himavatkhanda*. After that, the time came to give the stories an appropriate shape, which even a common man could read with interest. Still, I would like to say that we never wandered far from the text. We also continued to visit from time to time the holy places mentined in the *Mahatmya* to get more information for the book. I remember after the circumambulation visiting at least thirteen places, with my student and others, to talk to the priest and the local people about the traditions of the holy spot. Side by side, illustrations for the stories were being made, so we had to give necessary suggestions to the artist, as well.

In brief, this is the story of our efforts by which this mythological guidebook is coming into the hands of the readers. During its preparation, I praise the great patience, zeal, and devotion that Mr. Forbes has been dispalying. Finally, I sincerely request the readers not to hesitate about sending any of their reactions or suggestions to us regarding this book. We will always welcome them, and try to enrich the book though them.

श्री पशुपतिनाथाय नमः ।
॥ इति शुभम् ॥

(Obeisance to Lord Pashupatinath!
May it be auspicious for all.)

Vijaya Kumar Chaube
Vasanta Panchami
Vikrama. 2056

स्मारक, पुस्तकालय

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B. H.
I C.

The *Glory of Nepal: A Mythological Guidebook to the Kathmandu Valley* contains nine stories from the Himavatkhanda and Nepal-Mahatmya, translated from the Sanskrit. The stories are readable and entertaining whilst remaining faithful to the Sanskrit original. The book is profusely illustrated.

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